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ABSTRACT

This book provides practical information on obtaining a job. Though it is published in Australia, 11 chapters introduce a universal range of job search methods, presenting: the importance of goals and self-knowledge; the resume; preparing job search correspondence; the interview; self-promotion; job search tips and unusual strategies; networking; common questions; job sharing; coping with stress; and sample job application letters. Tips and tables are provided throughout this document. Fifteen references are included. (NLA)

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10th Anniversary Edition

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Win That Job!

This book is dedicated to Peggy, Natalie and Imogen, whose presence, patience, understanding and encouragement provided the support without which it would not have been written.

An Explanation—Worklife

The Centre for Worklife Counselling often provokes comment about its name. The term 'worklife' was chosen to reflect our continuing work in research, counselling, training and publishing material which relates to improving people's enjoyment from their employment activities and other aspects of their lives.

We do not accept the traditional view of career counselling—that is, to help people acquire satisfaction only from their working hours. We consider that occupational satisfaction can only occur when a person's total needs are included in the assessment of what is lacking and what needs to be done to increase inner well-being, improved relationships with others, and effective performance both at work and non-work activities. Ours is a holistic approach —we try to consider all features of a person at the same time as maintaining a respect for personal privacy by the use of non-threatening inquiries into thoughts and circumstances.

Our publications reflect this philosophy.

Win That Job!

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Books by Paul Stevens

The WORKLIFE Series, published by The Centre for Worklife Counselling, Sydney:

Career Transitions
The Australian Résumé Guide
Strategies for Dual-Career Couples
Planning For Me!
Helping Your Child Choose a Career
Stop Postponing the Rest of Your Life
Career Management Training Volumes I and II
Career Management: Whose Responsibility?
Handling Office Politics
How to Network and Select a Mentor
Career Strategies for the Ambitious

Other books by Paul Stevens:

Planning For Satisfying Work (WA Dept of Employment & Training,)
Your Job Search Organiser (Longman Cheshire/Pitman)
Winning At Work (Edward Arnold Australia/ Hodder & Stoughton)
Work Life Crisis (William Brooks/Jacaranda)
Work Satisfaction (William Brooks/Jacaranda)
Staff Problems Solved (William Brooks)

1 Who you are and where you are going

People frequently change jobs, or move from one employer to another. Some have their job search thrust upon them by suddenly losing their job through redundancy, a personality clash, or a temporary drop in performance. Those seeking alternative employment are concerned with identifying the right job and its real career opportunities, and how to present themselves effectively as the most suitable person to perform it.

Most job seekers need assistance in their job search: how to find jobs suited to particular skills and aspirations; the best manner in which to make contact with prospective employers, employment agencies and management consultants; how to catch the attention of an employer reviewing many job applications; the way in which interview questions are best handled; and what an applicant needs to find out in order to make a satisfying job and career choice.

Employers are increasingly using training systems designed to develop the selection skills of their recruitment personnel. However, the job applicant is often deprived of the same type of help in the job search process.

Even if you are not actually looking for a job, perhaps you are not quite as happy in your current job as you would like to be. Perhaps you cannot use all your talents to the full, or there are no long-term prospects. You may find that staying in an unsatisfying job causes you to become frustrated with many aspects of your life—

including your private life. This can easily cause your job performance to deteriorate.

If you do make the decision to resign, other problems then arise. You will need to cope with a new set of procedures and attitudes in the search for another job. You have to decide which direction will bring you more happiness and satisfaction in the future.

It can easily take four months—or more—to find a worthwhile position and an environment which is compatible with your objectives. During that time you will experience the pleasures and difficulties of re-evaluating your life and choice of occupation. You will become reacquainted with yourself, with your strengths and limitations. It is definitely a personal growth process—providing you prepare properly for it.

Many people fail to obtain jobs which are well within their performance capabilities. They fail because they make mistakes in their job-searching activities, or are unaware of the more effective ways to obtain and handle selection interviews. Their job applications tend to be poorly organised, weak in content, dull to read; they often include irrelevancies. Often hurriedly put together, such applications reduce the chances of obtaining interviews and employment offers. Frustration and depression can result when rejections are received or job interviews fail. These applicants are repeating the same mistakes, not knowing what is wrong with their approach.

This book is a practical how-to-do-it manual for the adult job searcher. Its purpose is to maximise the chances of achieving what you, the job seeker, really want from your worklife. From many years of experience of reading thousands of applications, handling innumerable interviews and selecting staff from office juniors to senior executives, I have seen how the successful candidate wins over competition from other applicants. The job search strategy tips which follow are based on the observation of mistakes made not once, but

hundreds of times, by applicants otherwise quite capable of performing the tasks of the vacant position.

The contents of this book are designed to help you sell your qualifications to prospective employers—not to help you obtain a job beyond the level of your experience, knowledge and capabilities. In that direction lies only the potential for unhappiness and failure.

Job search preparation

You would not start out on a long car journey or bush-walk without first planning and checking your equipment. The job search process is really no different. Care and time should be given to each item you will need. There are even some things you should prepare which you hope you will not need before your efforts are over. Credit facilities are an example of this.

It pays to research thoroughly or talk to an expert before you set out, so that the chances of failure are reduced. Vocational counsellors, career consultants, personnel officers and experienced recruiters know how to detect the faulty parts of your job search procedure which could cause failure.

You will need several items. The most important is a summary of what you want and what you are offering. The best way to do this is to prepare a résumé in which you provide, among other information, proof of your skills by listing what you have achieved for past employers.

You will need several types of job application letter. Preparing a set of letters for different uses before you start job searching is time well spent. Then, when you spot an employment opportunity, you can quickly amend one of your letters to suit the particular situation. You will need a dictionary and/or thesaurus to check the spelling of words and aid the search for an interest-arousing vocabulary. First-class typing facilities must be used in preparing these letters.

The 19 Skills of Job Seeking

Self-Evaluation

- Assessing personal values
- Clarifying preferred skills
- Identifying career record achievements
- Establishing job content goal
- Assessing personal constraints

Research

- Sources of useful printed information
- Learning different job search strategies

Detective

- Networking for vacancy information
- Developing employer prospect list

Communicating

- Questioning for information
- Writing résumé and correspondence
- Listening effectively
- Using appropriate assertiveness
- Use of voice to convey confidence

Transition

- Assembling support group
- Self-marketing
- Dressing appropriately
- Acquiring interim job
- Keeping physically fit

You need someone with whom to rehearse selection interviews. Practise answers to questions you are likely to be asked. Clothes in which you look and feel good should be prepared.

Arrange a programme of physical activity so that the less welcome effects of the stress of job searching can be controlled and reduced. Organise some of your friends to be your support group—people with whom you can talk frankly about your feelings and job-searching experiences.

Job searching can be an exhausting and demoralising experience. It can also be an exciting journey of exploration to a new interest in worklife and personal growth. Careful preparation is a critical factor in increasing the chances of a satisfactory and early conclusion to your job search campaign.

> ☛ *Sad are people who choose not to analyse who they are and what they want. They settle for safety, shutting out any experience or information which could cause change.*

Find out about yourself

Many people put the cart before the horse when they try to find a new job. They start with the jobs that are advertised, and not with themselves, their skills, interests, values and abilities. This is the wrong approach.

Your first step in finding a satisfying job in your chosen field should be to analyse your past experience and assess all your abilities. This is not an easy task, whether you are reviewing one year or 25 years of employment experiences.

Finding out who we really are and what suites our particular uniqueness is a lifelong exercise. Jeanette Winterson in *Sexing the Cherry* wrote in 1990, "The Buddhists say there are 149 ways to God. I'm not looking for God, only for myself, and that is far more complicated. God has had a great deal written about Him: nothing has been written about me."

You need to find out what different types of work environments encourage you to be successful. Ask yourself:

- What have I done successfully? (and enjoyed?)
- What have I done that others have commended me for doing well?
- What areas of my chosen field of work am I *really* qualified to administer?
- What training have I received and benefited from since leaving school?

You need to develop a comprehensive list of the skills and abilities that you have to offer an employer, you are not 'just' an accountant, a secretary or a sales representative. Most people underestimate their working potential.

To convince an employer that you have much to offer, it is essential to know the full range of your skills and capabilities. Many people go through their worklives using only a few skills, unaware of the full extent of their talents and capabilities.

An astute job seeker takes steps to have this assessment carried out by competent counsellors. This process is likely to identify worthwhile points of which the job seeker was previously unaware. As additional evidence of your past employment and education record, a counsellor's evaluation could be the item that influences the employer's selection decision in your favour. It does not

matter whether you are looking for your first job or are an experienced member of the labour market. Using a counsellor's service is no admission of weakness. It is a sensible and practical step which may shorten the period of your job search.

> ☛ *This book supplies in words the methods and motivation to succeed. Other people will be required to supply you with the support necessary to sustain it.*

Some skills emerge early in our lives. Most develop more slowly and can be difficult to recognise. Our skills grow in number and quality as we learn from experiences, both at work and in other activities. It is a common misconception that if a skill was not learned in employment then it is of no interest to employers. People working in as career guidance counsellors know this is not true. In fact, we all learn many work-related skills through everyday living. A housewife certainly knows about stock control and budget management; a school-leaver who has helped organise a school dance or play knows about planning; and a club committee member certainly knows about handling complaints. A skill learned in activities like these can be applied usefully in employment and be used to improve your job applications.

Contact the government vocational guidance services branch in your area or investigate the services of career counsellors in private practice. This investment of your time could be an important move towards learning more about who you really are and help you to attain a satisfactory worklife.

Alternatively, check with your local public library staff and consult relevant books containing career plan

The Four Stages to Acquiring a New Job / Career

1 ASSESSING YOUR

- skills
- interests
- knowledge
- preferences
- experiences
- temperament
- accomplishments

2 EXPLORING CAREER

- information
- skills
- objectives
- targets (individuals, organisations
- alternatives

3 DEVELOPING SKILLS TO

- conduct research
- write résumés and letters
- prospect
- network
- conduct information interviews
- interview
- negotiate

4 IMPLEMENTING JOB SEARCH STEPS

- research
- prospecting
- networking
- informational interviews
- job interviews
- negotiations

ning guides, self-assessment aids and skill inventory questionnaires. If your library does not have useful literature to help your diagnosis of who you are and what you can offer, a management consultant should be able to advise where such information can be found. A number of self-analysis and skills search exercises are contained in another book I have written: *Stop Postponing the Rest of Your Life* (pub. The Centre for Worklife Counselling).

There are several other self-learning workbooks available to help you to conduct personal analysis and skills exploration. Such books provide exercises and questionnaires which help you examine your personal values, career preferences, life satisfactions, work-related strengths and underdeveloped capabilities.

Some professional counsellors conduct group activities in the form of workshops. These have the objective of generating discussion and mutual support for career analysis and job search planning. Properly led, workshops are a highly supportive, low-risk environment in which to embark on such self-exploration.

Although workshops (with workbooks) are an important tool in the process of self-analysis, you may not have access to them or you may prefer another method.

To uncover your full range of skills, knowledge areas, values and work preferences, examining what you have already achieved is an essential task. It is useful to share your writings about your worklife experiences with others. In the process you can often learn more about yourself from their comments.

Achieving job search goals

You have arrived at the point where you have identified the skills you enjoy using and the type of job where you could use your skills and experience.

A common pitfall at this stage is to regard the process as being complete—you feel the only thing that now has to be done is to apply immediately for the 'right' job. But

this feeling of self-awareness and self-confidence is often deceptive. You probably don't have sufficient information to find the right job or employer, nor would you have accumulated all the necessary evidence to persuade employers to hire you.

The rest of this chapter is aimed at those who have resigned or been dismissed from their job, but the principles apply even if you are still employed while job searching.

> ☛ *Life is never boring when you follow the quest for more knowledge about yourself. The mind is busy reassessing what really matters.*

Managing your money during the job search

First things first. Consider your finances—finding the right job can take a lot of time.

When you leave a job, you probably leave with severance pay and accumulated holiday pay; you will probably also have some savings. But even if you have been very careful and have quite a reserve fund, you cannot afford to let this run down too low.

Don't underestimate the amount of time finding a job will take. It usually takes highly skilled job seekers from four to eight months to find a new position—and that's assuming a steady search effort. You are going to have to prepare for this length of time.

So, how do you buy some more time without a full income? You sit down and draw up an accurate income and expenditure chart. You can become quite creative in ways to save on expenses. You need to prune a lot and there is only one way to do it: identify the large outlays and stop them or severely cut them down. Also review

the whole range of smaller expenses and the last four months of chequebook entries.

Analyse your expenses and work out a realistic budget. It should take into account all the weekly expenditure which cannot be avoided: food, gas and electricity, petrol, etc. Until you are working again, you have to look at *every* item of expenditure and ask: Do I *have* to spend it?

You should, of course, register for unemployment benefits. It is your right—you contributed towards it when you were a taxpayer.

Manage your debts very carefully. Don't just stop paying; contact creditors and explain the situation. Often building societies and banks will be understanding when they know that you will pay what you can. You can often work out an arrangement whereby you pay a certain percentage of the bill; the creditor can see you are trying to keep faith with them and you are also reducing your debt.

Face up to another possible problem—health and life assurance. Check what you are entitled to in the way of medical benefits when you are unemployed or your income is reduced. And if you have a life insurance policy, don't automatically let it lapse—you may regret the loss of continuity later on.

Now take the new family budget to a friend who is an accountant, if that is possible, or to your bank manager. It's not the time to be sensitive about your personal matters—it's commonsense to get help, and you need a workable financial plan so that you can concentrate on the job hunt in a good frame of mind.

Interim jobs

The gap between your need for immediate employment and the day you find a job which you really want may be several months. Don't hesitate to seek and accept an interim job. Many avoid this and so subject themselves to extended financial worry.

Many feel that having worked for a while in an unrelated occupation will discredit their application for a permanent position, but most sensible recruiters acknowledge an individual's need to earn money. They are more likely to respect an applicant who has demonstrated versatility and a practical approach to current employment conditions. If your interim job has some relationship to your main line of work, so much the better. The following examples show this:

- A teenager unable to obtain a carpentry apprenticeship could seek employment with a timber merchant in order to become familiar with wood types and the people who use them.

- A transportation or distribution manager could take a job as a courier in order to improve their understanding of traffic problems.

- A sales representative could carry out (casual) market research interviewing assignments, and thus develop the skills to cope with 'cold calling'.

Ideally, an interim job should have two aspects in addition to pay. It should enable you to make contacts with many people and, in the process, spot opportunities for asking for help with your main employment search; and it should not be so demanding that you give up on search activities for more desirable employment. Working as a car driver, cinema attendant, bartender, temporary office worker, commission agent, home cleaner, suburban handyman or comparison shopper all meet these requirements.

You may surprise yourself and discover a new career direction, which may pay less but provide the job satisfaction you value more.

Reality testing

Reality testing means obtaining information to verify whether the type and level of job you have identified is the most appropriate for you. At the same time, you are gathering information which will be a valuable addition to your job application. The more convincing the evidence of capabilities, the more likely the chances of securing interview invitations when you begin your job search.

What inhibits many people from carrying through the reality testing phase of job searching? Perhaps the belief that the true nature of an occupation or job cannot be studied without actually performing the tasks involved, or that the true nature of an industry needs to be experienced to be understood. Neither belief is, in fact, an obstacle to reality testing. Consider the wealth of information you can obtain from the following:

- *People* You can make contact with people already in your targeted field, customers of and suppliers to the relevant industry, and ask for information from the professional or trade association.

- *Publications* Most industries publish information about their activities. Annual reports, newsletters and house journals are further examples of information which you can easily obtain.

In fact, there is very little which is kept secret about the nature of jobs or activities of most employers. You simply need to ask them.

The process of analysis of the industry or job that seems right for you is not complete until you can honestly answer 'yes' to the following questions:

- Do you actually know as much about your target industry as is likely to be expected of someone of your job level?

- Do you have a thorough knowledge of its present trends and future outlook?

- Are you now familiar with most of the employers offering the types of work activities you believe are most appropriate for you? (You need to know the size of the companies; where they operate; their current reputation; and what their future plans appear to be.)

- Do you know the most appropriate way of approaching these employers for a job?

- Have you learnt enough about the target employer to be able to lead a conversation with intelligent questions and demonstrate the thoroughness of your research?

The breadth and depth of the information you can obtain depends very much on the care you exercise in asking for what you want. These considerations may sound obvious, but your future worklife satisfaction can depend on them. Do not take a casual or accelerated path through the reality-testing phase. There is too much at stake to treat it carelessly.

☛ *What matters is where you are going—not where you have come from.*

Maintaining your morale

There are some basic rules which you can follow to keep your spirits up and improve your chances of success while job hunting:

- Retain a positive attitude and think of yourself as one of the 90% per cent who secure a job, not one of the 10 per cent who miss out.

- Do not expect any job to guarantee you security.
- Try to have a flexible attitude during your working lifetime, as you are likely to have a number of different jobs.

- Have confidence and belief in your abilities before trying to promote yourself to someone else.

- Finally, and most importantly, fight despondency. Do not give up when you are not immediately successful—keep trying.

When the process of self-analysis and skills identification is complete, your budget worked out and prospective employment analysed and reality tested, you are ready to begin the search for a specific job. If you have skipped a phase of this process, then you are very likely to have to go through it all again at some point in the future.

What, Where and How—

What do you want to do? | *Where?*

1	*2*	*3*
Self-Assessments	*Assessment by specialists*	*Preferred location and nature of employment*
• Identifying *all* skills / capabilities through auto-biography • Analysis through group work • Self-scoring tests • Classification of transferable skills • Preferred lifestyle • Your real values	• Aptitude testing • Interest inventories • Temperament measurements • Career counsellors • Life planning advisers • Vocational guidance officers	• Geographical • Commuting • Working conditions • Kinds of knowledge you want to use, problems you want to solve • Freelance executive or technician • Self-employment • Manufacturing, institutional, retail, service, academic, etc.

—The Steps of Job Searching

Where? *How do you find it?*

4	5	6
Determined by what is available or can be created or improved	*Traditional Methods*	*Active Approaches*
• Occupational directories • Growth industries • Employer / trade associations • Manpower forecasts • Small business agency advisers • Economic research consultancies • New business opportunities • Media adverts	• 3 hours on job searching each week • Responding to adverts • Via employment agencies, consultants, headhunters, executive search practitioners	• 4-6 hours on job seeking each day • Via service clubs, e.g. Rotary, Apex • Via personal contacts • Via referral interviews • Direct mail to targeted employers • Via media references • Past employers • Self-advertising • Forming a self-help club • Research interviews

2 Your résumé

Preparing interview-winning résumés

The résumé, curriculum vitae, personal data sheet, bio-data, employment record—it's called by a variety of terms—is a key component of job searching and critical in overcoming that first job-seeking hurdle, securing a face-to-face interview. Why? Because of that old enemy, time. Managers, personnel officers and employment consultants are all pressed for time. So when the day's mail is delivered, the style and presentation of an application will directly affect whether a reject letter is sent in reply or an invitation to meet is offered.

Applicants who attempt to include everything in one lengthy letter are risking their chances of competing effectively with other applicants. But the résumé approach with a brief covering letter can give you significant advantages. Don't let your job application efforts be wasted. Remember, the chances are that less than 10 per cent of applicants will be invited to an interview. The challenge is to use the résumé technique effectively.

To compile an attention-retaining résumé is hard work and rarely accomplished in less than five drafts. Remind yourself during this hard work that your résumé is the most important written communication of your search for a job. Not only will it accompany your covering letter of application, but your résumé is necessary for any direct walk-in applications you may make. It will be sent to employment consultants and recruitment agencies; be given to your referees to bring them up to date with your achievements; and be useful in many

non-job search activities such as loan applications and membership approaches to professional associations. It's more than a data sheet about yourself—it's a sales document about a very important product—you.

In an attractively arranged form it should be a clear, concise statement of your key capabilities of value to prospective employers and your income-earning competencies.

> ☛ *No employer is interested in what you want—until interest is created in what you can offer!*

Objectives

Consider what you're actually doing when you mail a job application. You are trying to persuade the recipient to consider you for a job in competition with many other applicants who are trying to achieve the same objective. Hence your résumé needs to make an immediate and persuasive impact that you should be the preferred candidate.

First it must capture and maintain the reader's attention. A sloppy appearance or a dull beginning will not achieve this. Then the critical issue is to make the reader want to see you. Finally, you want the reader to act on this desire and communicate with you quickly.

Remember, although your job application is likely to be your first communication with a prospective employer, it is the last one over which you have complete control. If it succeeds, and you become a candidate, most of your subsequent communications with the employer will involve answering the questions put to you. With your first communication you are free to say

what you want and you should seize this opportunity to create the most favourable impression you can.

It is likely that you will apply for 30 or more jobs during your job search. The exercise can be managed a lot more efficiently if the résumé is regarded as the key to the operation. With this approach, your résumé should be designed to incorporate all the necessary parts of an application. A covering letter is then used to show the relevance of the facts in the résumé to each job application in turn. In many cases, you can avoid having to complete an employment application form by producing a résumé which sings your praises in an inoffensive, comprehensive way.

Design considerations

Taking a structured approach to designing your résumé will help you to avoid leaving out essential information and enable you to reveal only what you wish. Your résumé can be cheaply reproduced and used for several job applications by adapting the covering letter to suit each vacancy's special requirements.

Your résumé must be presented clearly. Typing is essential, and so is access to a high quality photocopier or laser printer for reproducing copies. Don't arrange for it to be instant printed—you may give the impression of a professional job changer if you do.

Your claims for consideration will need to be clear and concise. Above all, your information must be free from spelling and typing errors. You are likely to have less than one minute of the reader's time in which to sell yourself—that's the average time spent on a first reading. Your competitive strengths must, therefore, be highlighted to make an impression in such a short time. Since finding the right person for a vacancy is critical to the success and growth of an organisation, the ability to assess a résumé quickly has become very important to recruiters.

Your résumé should not be in narrative form. Basically, it should be a series of tabulated facts in a format that is easily read. Use phrases rather than complete sentences. The order in which you present information should be considered carefully. If your education background is your strongest asset, put it at the beginning. Give less emphasis to a weak point by allotting it less space or by putting at the end. If formal education is low and experience high, promote your experience first.

Try hard not to exceed two pages if you have less than five years' employment experience, and three pages if you have more. Use A4 size paper—it is easier to file and more likely to remain in good shape after rehandling. Use one side only for each page of your résumé. Type on a good grade of white unlined bond paper. Mail out clean unfolded photocopies of résumés but never photocopies of the covering letter—each one should be typed individually.

There are several PC software systems, such as The Résumé Kit (Spinnaker Software) or ResumExpert (Statusgraph). Programs within such software can help you to assemble a résumé using their prompters, large margins, templates, section heading choices, font styles and typeface point sizes.

I do not recommend that you rely on the services of the many résumé design services for the compilation of your résumé. It's your worklife, your job search and your work satisfaction which is at stake. It is wrong to abdicate this responsibility to another unless you wish to use only their skill in printing out to a high quality.

Functional résumés

To list your past employers, positions held and your achievements will satisfy many résumé purposes. But the job seeker with a mixed employment history, such as a variety of occupations, or one who is striving to change occupations and move into a different career or

specialist area, should consider constructing a functional résumé.

This is a method of résumé writing which groups information about you around four or more key functional skills. While a chronological résumé is one in which experience is listed in reverse time order, the functional résumé contains no specific dates in the employment experience section but rather the common title of each function or skill supported by evidence of how you acquired this knowledge.

For example, accountants may be able to identify several distinct skill areas, such as systems analysis, auditing, financial management, taxation and payroll management. They may wish to put particular emphasis on their financial management experience as the specialist area they wish to pursue. By placing financial management at the head of the work experience section with supporting examples of experience and skill, both the applicant's career interests and transferable skills will be seen immediately by the reader.

The functional résumé is designed to promote you on the basis of your skills and abilities, not to list how many employers you have had. It can lessen the impact of a poor job history, set your résumé apart from others and guide the reader to focus on your capabilities rather than a list of past job duties.

The older applicant, career changer or self-employed job searcher may benefit from this technique. It often makes a résumé more interesting than a list of names and dates, however creditable the record may be. A functionally arranged résumé may supply that important difference in approach which wins the offer of an interview. It enables an applicant to record work experience and claims for consideration and relate them directly to the particular job at stake. It's harder work to compile, but stands a greater chance of convincing others that you have what it takes to perform the tasks of your job goal. It may even influence the reader to

create a vacancy for you in order to acquire your problem-solving abilities and your particular skills.

Attention techniques

The spacing and organisation of your information is very important. Consider how much trouble advertisers of consumer goods put into the design and layout of advertisements. Your task is no different. You are selling yourself as a product of better value than others. So the following recommendations should not be glossed over.

- Typeface: to emphasise a word or phrase use a different typeface or font.
- Capitalise: use capital letters in different parts of the résumé.
- Margins: allow plenty of white space around points you wish to emphasise.
- Underlining: so simple, but another way of varying the appearance and highlighting certain facts about you.

Résumé title

Remember your aim is to gain attention by the persuasive impact of the words you use and the design within which you present them. Be different with the first thing which is read. Don't head your document 'Résumé', or 'Curriculum Vitae'—it's evident what it is! Adapt one of the following alternatives to your situation and objective:

BARBARA BRADSHAW
Account Executive Credentials

GRANT ROBERTSON
Product Officer with
Progressive Pharmaceutical Company

JACKIE ROBLES
Employment Assets for a
Career in Accounting

Your name should appear first, positioned in the centre, typed prominently in capital letters. Avoid nicknames; use full first name.

The top right-hand corner should record the telephone numbers you can be reached on. (Time could be of the essence. If a recruitment consultant or employer can't reach you quickly your résumé may be passed over. If you have no personal telephone attended by people on whom you can rely, make arrangements with a friend.)

Section headings

Plan the design of your résumé as a series of blocks divided by section headings. The order in which they are placed depends on your particular background and the requirements of the nature of job you are seeking. For example, a university student should highlight education. An experienced person with considerable employment experience should highlight their employment record. Both should put personal data at the end of the résumé. Remember, the objective is to gain attention and *retain* attention, by highlighting the factors in your background most important to the needs of the vacancy. This requires that you communicate your knowledge and skills transferable to your job search goal *before* information about your age, citizenship, or marital status.

The sections common for most résumé purposes are shown below in the order in which you should arrange them:

- Career Objective
- Professional (or Work) Experience
- Training Course Attendance
- Education
- Personal interests
- Personal data
- References

A key objective of your résumé is to compete effectively with others. One way to do this is to use the most attention-seeking set of section headings. See the following list for some examples. Experiment with your selection of section headings until you are satisfied your résumé is likely to look more interesting than others.

Alternative Section Headings For Your Résumé

Underline or circle your choice of section heading from each block which follows

Career goal
Career objective
Employment aspirations
Employment objective
Short-term career objective
Long-term career objective

Summary of skills and experience/ knowledge
Summary of main areas of competence
Summary of skill areas
Special areas of expertise
Key areas of knowledge and skills
Précis of major skills
Main capability areas
Main capabilities
Special skills

Formal qualifications
Business-oriented educational qualifications
Educational attainments
Good preparation in education
Educational preparation for career
Tertiary education achievements
Successful tertiary studies
Comprehensive business-oriented education
Relevant training and education
Formal training
Study accomplishments

Employment record
Career achievement summary
Record of employers
Employment summary
Progressive employment record
Record of respected employers
Professional experience
Work experience
Useful work experience

Professional achievement record
Breadth of experience
Analytical and organisation skills
Communication skills
Promotional ability
Précis of key responsibilities
Career path record

Accomplishments of responsibility
Projects of special interest
Highlights of my career
Special challenges

Useful machine knowledge
Language knowledge
Précis of key projects and achievements
Special achievements
Notable experiences

Self-development activities
Knowledge enhancement
Personal development activities
Special awards/recognition

Professional association memberships
Career development learning experiences

Personal
Personal data
Personal information
More facts about me

Referees
References
People who know me well
People who know my work well

A note of caution before you complete your résumé. Remember the length restriction; layout considerations; need for standard abbreviations; phrases rather than sentences; the need for economy of words; the time it will take the reader to read it.

Tips follow on the contents of each of the main sections of your résumé.

Career objective(s)

A résumé without an opening objective misses the opportunity to tell the reader quickly what you want. It is particularly important with unsolicited applications where the recipient needs to match your objectives with possible job openings not yet advertised. Clearly stating your objective helps the reader in this task.

Short statements of objectives are not easy to compose and are more difficult when combined with a summary of experience. Yet a concise opening statement not only helps the reader but also projects you as a positive, self-confident person with clarity of purpose.

'I want to find a position which will allow me to use my knowledge' is not the way to compose your career objective. Compare it with: 'To become a store manager in a national retail chain with opportunities to advance to area sales management.'

This statement reveals the long-range career plan of a person who knows where they want to go in their career.

Note this job seeker's approach which contains every element mentioned. It also gives the key message that the applicant has something of value to the prospective employer. 'To use twenty years' successful and rewarding personnel management, industrial relations and training experience as a lecturer in business subjects for the benefit of tomorrow's managers.'

There is another reason for working hard to compose a clear career objective. Many recruitment consultants and employers use computer-based software systems to enter in applicants' data. By the nature of the computer systems, this is carried out by categories. A job seeker is more likely to have their information entered in such databases if what they are seeking is unambiguous and explicit. Job seekers who reveal they are confused about their career direction may be discarded at this stage of evaluation.

Education

The amount of data entered in this block should be in proportion to the length of the period since you completed full-time education. It you have recently left secondary school or a tertiary institution, the block should appear in the early part of the résumé. If you do not have formal tertiary qualifications, place the block towards the end.

Start with your highest attainment and/or most recent attainment.

Use abbreviations that are customary when scholastic or academic studies are written down, but make sure they are correct by checking with reference books in your local public library. Record qualifications first, then institution, followed by graduating year. Some examples are:

MBA, Macquarie University 1990

Cobol Programming Course, NSW Institute of Technology (now University of Technology, Sydney) 1988

BComm (Major: Accounting), University of NSW 1974

Personnel Administration Cert., Sydney Technical College 1976

If you are posting your résumé before graduation, put 'will graduate with BComm, majoring in accounting, from University of NSW in November 1992.'

If your course of study has included a research project or a major or minor thesis, give details—especially if it can be related to your employment goal.

Include school leaving results only if you think there is some mileage to be gained from their inclusion. Some sources recommend that you don't mention the name of your school because of possible religious, ethnic, or social status implications. I recommend that you do. If some bias or prejudice does exist, it's best to find this out in advance and not work for such an employer.

If you have graduated within the past four years, it is very important to record the subjects and results you obtained. High results can earn a graduate 3-8 per cent more in starting salary. This is a significant bonus, when one considers that salary increases are incremental and cumulative. If you have a failure, anticipate some questions and prepare your responses before the interview. Postgraduates might think the prospective employer will not be interested in their undergraduate record, but reality does not bear out this belief.

Highlight the subjects you chose. This is an important indication of how you approached your course of study.

Those who have, or are completing, a tertiary qualification by part-time study should not hide their light under a bushel. Let the employer know you were or are a part-time student, and make it prominent in the résumé. Record how many years you studied part-time. Credit points will mount in the reader's mind only if you record the facts clearly. If space is limited in your overall résumé, attach a separate list of your subjects and results as an appendix. This list is the only permissible addition to your application package of résumé and covering letter.

Work experience

The headings for this block can be professional experience, work experience or career record or others listed in 'Alternative Section Headings For Your Résumé'. Avoid employment history—it has connotations of old age.

This block is the most critical of all. It gives you the best opportunity to highlight your strengths and disguise your weaknesses. Not only is it the most critical, but also the most difficult. It requires honest self-evaluation.

Don't draft any part of this section without thinking carefully about all your past positions and the employers for whom you worked.

In the fewest possible words, highlight the most important features of the positions you have held. (Don't send a copy of a past job description.) First, jot down on a separate piece of paper:

- the responsibilities of each position;
- the authority you had, such as number of people supervised, size of budget you administered;
- actual achievements. Don't cheat on yourself or be too self-effacing; if sales increased 15 per cent while you were the responsible representative or manager, then say so; if labour turnover and absenteeism were reduced while you were manager of the department, note that down; if you succeeded in contributing to company profits, be sure to say so.

From your notes under each of these headings, select the most creditable points as the basis for writing a positive and impressive professional experience record.

You can make your responsibilities—even mundane ones—sound important by choosing strong phrases to describe them. Instead of simply saying you were a bartender, for example, list all the tasks you did in that job—serving customers, keeping the bar and service area clean, etc.—and then edit them, using numbers and action verbs. For example: Assembled an average of 70 drinks an hour during busy period for customers and waiters.

Composing your statements of achievement for your résumé

In formulating evidence of your capabilities by composing achievement statements, search your memory for:

- examples of when you increased sales, exceeded quotas, or successfully introduced a new product or service;

- proposals you submitted which were subsequently adopted by your employer;

- any major projects in which you had responsibility or led the activity;

- any procedures, policies, programmes, changes that you introduced which were successful and solved problems;

- events or situations which those around you viewed positively in terms of your involvement in them.

Employment record

Your job titles and employers should be entered in reverse chronological order—most recent job first. Try to imagine what the reader is looking for as the person reads your résumé. The reader wants to know quickly whether your position today merits consideration and has some similarity to the vacancy. Their interest will quickly be lost if you begin by recording the fact that your first position in 1969 was as a bank clerk or management trainee. Provide more evidence of achievements in recent positions and less in earlier positions.

Each listing should contain job title and name of employer (no need to take up space with their address). If the name of an employer does not readily indicate the industry in which you worked, be sure to record it, e.g. J. E. Jackson Pty Ltd (shoe industry). The dates of the employment period (years and months) should be recorded. If you took 18 months off to travel overseas, say so. The chances are that your prospective inter-

viewer has travelled and conversation can readily be stimulated by discussing experiences.

Don't record reasons for leaving past employers. One, because it will take up too much space; two, because there is no way your real reasons can be summarised in four or five words; and, finally, you may have some awkward reasons which you can handle better at the interview.

The reader of your résumé will most likely be looking for evidence of a progressive career. If a person has accepted increasing responsibility with each position or change, a favourable impression can be readily made.

Action Verbs

To help you write concise statements about your achievements, which will have significant impact on readers, use the following to start your statements:

directed	motivated	conceived
originated	established	negotiated
guided	controlled	created
led	implemented	invented
managed	conducted	composed
structured	planned	organised
supervised	coordinated	developed
administered	revised	founded
designed	modified	solved
increased	expanded	accelerated
built	researched	proved
provided	analysed	scheduled
generated	evaluated	monitored
saved	streamlined	improved
produced	accomplished	maximised
eliminated	performed	optimised
decreased	delivered	instructed
sold	launched	maintained
reduced	trained	taught

Tangible evidence of career progress is important to record. Obvious indicators are changes in position title, especially when increased responsibility accompanied the title changes.

Another indication of career progress is the type of company with which you have been employed. Experienced résumé readers will have done their homework so that they recognise and can assess the reputation of companies you have been with. The adage about judging a person by the company they keep is applicable to screening résumés.

Draft your employment record in different ways, then sleep on it. Next day, review the alternatives you have written and make your choice.

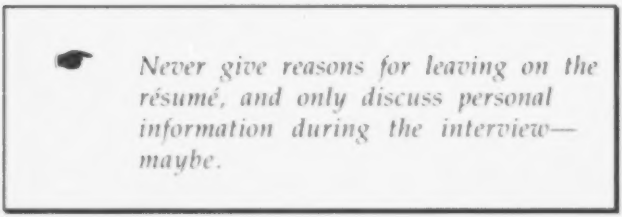
It's a hard task to compose a concise summary of past employment, but it's an essential part of a quality résumé. In most cases it is the most important section of your application.

What you have done successfully in the past is your strongest case for re-employment. Yet we are taught throughout our lives that boasting is wrong. It is easier to think we are not talented, or to be reticent about the special skills and successes each of us has. Modesty wins no points when a potential job is on the line—it won't pay your food bill. Job seekers need to learn and practise the positive communication of their past skills and successes in a positive way, in both spoken and written form.

It is not easy to feel good about oneself if unemployment has continued for a long time. Memories of achievements with previous employers are often clouded by feelings of helplessness and poor self-worth. At times like these, we need the help of others who can point out the value of our achievements and help to restore our self-confidence.

Pride should not be a barrier to seeking advice or buying suitable books to read about how we can learn more about ourselves and how successes in our past will make us a better applicant. The plain truth is most of us

are unaware of many of our key personal strengths and problem-solving abilities.



Never give reasons for leaving on the résumé, and only discuss personal information during the interview—maybe.

Additional achievement areas

The achievement statements in your résumé shouldn't be restricted to your full-time working life. An applicant can score a competitive edge over others by emphasising other skills acquired or applied and highlighting personal industry in other than paid employment. Any of the following activities can represent accomplishments —if they are applicable to the job you want they are a good selling point for you: self-development courses, aptitude and vocational interest test results, part-time employment, travel, hobbies, volunteer work, personal projects.

Describe only your experiences and interests which indicate specific benefits to your potential employer. Don't rush preparing this list, for new aspects are sure to occur to you as you think about it. It will be a rare person who won't find something worthy of mention, so take the time to consider your total activities—not just those at work.

You need to describe the skills you have developed in terms employers can understand. For example, those with experience in volunteer work may be able to describe the skills developed as: evaluating programs, preparing budgets, planning transportation logistics, public speaking, negotiating, public relations. Employers need to evaluate your unpaid work in the same way as

paid work. Using terms which are common to both activities is therefore very important.

Course attendance

This block is a frequently neglected part of résumé construction, yet can make the difference between an interview invitation or rejection letter.

Course attendance does not refer to formal secondary or tertiary education. They belong in the education block. Courses can range from Outward Bound, Australian Institute of Management, in-company management or technical training courses, Toastmasters' public speaking, to EDP Appreciation and Dale Carnegie. The objective is to indicate that you have increased your personal skills and knowledge by participating in a formal course of instruction. It's not very important whether the course concluded with an exam or award or simply a certificate of attendance.

If the course of instruction was related to the skills relevant to your job search goal, record it and the month and year of attendance. It can often indicate how much effort and sacrifice of time you have put into self-development, or whether a former employer thought so highly of you that they financed your attendance at the course.

This block is particularly important to those who have not obtained formal tertiary education qualifications. It can help you compete effectively with applicants who have.

Recording salary

Whether your current, or most recent, pay level should be entered on your résumé is not an easy decision.

Giving your current pay and pay levels for past positions can indicate the general status and rate of progress you have achieved. If the advertisement for a vacancy has not indicated an appointment salary, revealing your

current one at this stage in your application can prevent your time being wasted. If it is too high, the reader will not invite you for an interview.

The case for not recording your current salary level covers a number of factors. Primarily, it reduces your negotiating ability at the stage when you are offered the job. Most employers are likely to add 10 per cent to your current salary in their offer to you, rather than the higher figure the job is really worth. Secondly, you may be quite prepared to change employers for the same pay level or even less if you consider there are special aspects of the job which would suit you better than your current employment. You won't be able to gather the data on which to make this judgment until you have been to an interview.

Finally, in these times, pay is an inadequate indicator of the remuneration you currently receive. To convey the full extent of your remuneration in a résumé could easily take half a page, for it covers not only your taxable pay but also leave loading terms, insurances, sick leave entitlements, superannuation, study leave, provision of vehicle and the like. There is considerable disparity between employers in the nature and extent of employment benefits provided. In some cases you have the choice of reducing your pay level below the 'going rate' and increasing your benefits, such as medical fund subsidies, superannuation.

I suggest that you avoid mentioning your pay level in your résumé, unless you believe there is a significant advantage to be gained when your résumé competes with others for the job you want.

References

There is a choice to be made here. For the sake of brevity, a statement that references will be supplied on request is often sufficient. This can be particularly advantageous when applying for several jobs. It leaves you the option that if your invitation is taken up, you

can provide names of people more suitable to the particular vacancy. The least effective referees are personal referees such as clergyman, family doctor or friends.

If you decide to include referees in your résumé, limit them to two—at the maximum three.

The selection and rehearsal of your referees is an important aspect of job searching. Choose referees who have had close contact with you or supervised you while you carried out work. This is more important than whether the referee holds a high position. Choose referees who sound mature, clear and confident over the telephone. Don't assume that they do—ring them to check.

These days many recruitment consultants and employers prefer to telephone your referees, as written references cannot include a full picture of you and your work behaviour. Discuss your résumé with your referees when it is in draft form. In this way they become acquainted with what you intend to say about yourself. Also they can often recommend changes which will improve its contents.

Unless you have a very special reason, do not attach written references to your job application package. They are less than convincing, as most employers know they will never read a poor one. A better idea is to take these references with you to an interview in case you are asked for them.

If you decide to include details of your referees in your résumé, record the referee's full name, occupation, address and telephone number—both work and home. Name two, and keep one or more in reserve in case the recruitment consultant or employer requests them.

There is no specific act of any Parliament in Australia that compels an employer to provide a reference. Some state and federal industrial awards require that a statement of service be provided, but this is nothing more than a record of employment. Employers do have to be aware of the legal duty of care and of defamation laws when providing verbal or typed references.

If you want an employer to be responsive to a reference inquiry, do talk to the person most likely to be contacted and request their support.

> ☛ *If referees are called too many times, they tend to become apathetic and less enthusiastic—they might even become annoyed.*

An employer will not always contact your referees. Yet your list is useful to a prospective employer because it shows that you know people who can comment on your character and your ability. Keep your referees informed about your job search progress. They can often be very useful in discussing new job application approaches and rehearsing your interview behaviour.

Credit references are rarely relevant. Even if you own your home or have three mortgages plus further loans, there is no reason to record such data in your résumé.

Personal interests

The lifestyle of the people already working in a department where a vacancy exists is pertinent to employers who want to achieve good inter-staff relations. Hence they often examine with extra care the section of résumés which indicates hobbies, interests and community activities in an endeavour to assess how an applicant might mesh with those in the team.

This block requires extra care so that it does not cause your application more harm than good. It is a sad fact of life that people favour others with traits they like and show disfavour to those they dislike. Recruiters are not immune from this human failing.

Here are some general tips: don't include membership of religious or political organisations; don't record

general interests such as gardening without any other activities entered; do include your private flying if you seek a post in the aeronautical industry, your ham radio operator experience if you seek a job in broadcasting or electronics. Select those personal interests which have some relevance to the job for which you are applying.

Your personal interests could be extended to include community involvement, if you are an active member of such associations as Apex, Rotary, school councils, etc.

Personal data

Use your birth date rather than age, to avoid having to retype your résumé following a birthday. If you are over 40 years old, omit any reference to age.

Height, weight or willingness to relocate are not sufficiently important to take up precious space. Some people choose to omit marital status, feeling it has no bearing on their ability to do a job. Details of race, religion, ethnic origin and health should not be included. All such items are now subject to anti-discrimination legislation.

If you are not an Australian citizen, but do have permanent resident status, make this clear lest the reader assume wrongly the employer is not permitted to hire you as a permanent full-time employee.

Avoid using a post office box for your address unless you have to. It can infer you are an itinerant—even though you may be paying off a mortgage! There is no need to record the state where you live if the postcode is included. If you have a temporary address, as many students do during semesters, record it as well as your home address.

Military service

It is to your advantage to record this in your résumé even if it is limited. Often such service provides valuable skills development opportunities to add to one's

background. Mention the type of training received, what skills were acquired, and whether you now belong to the reserve forces.

Many employers are ignorant of the vast range of skills that defence force members obtain. Make sure you list in your résumé your participation in training programmes, the skills you learnt, and achievements in tests and exams.

Military experience contributes to a person's development and builds credentials for civilian positions. Carefully explore your military experience for accomplishments and capabilities.

Special awards, offices and honours

Remember, the objective is to highlight your qualifications and accomplishments. The reader, therefore, should be made aware of the recognition you have received for achievement and skill. Your having been an office-bearer in a student or community service organisation is an important selling point. Any special academic awards or prizes should be mentioned, as well as involvement in community projects.

Do record your membership in work-related professional associations. Give the title, date and publisher of any relevant articles or books you have written. If you have been a guest speaker at academic or business gatherings in recent times, enter the details on your résumé.

Do *not* include information that will tend to discredit you. If you do have some background that may be difficult to explain, save it for the interview.

Writing up your achievements

Many find it difficult to change from describing their past job duties to the more effective approach of describing them in terms of what they achieved. The following examples should help you, when you are analysing your own experience, to extract points which could help to

sell yourself to an employer as the preferred candidate for employment. As you read them, think of your own background, and write down:

- specific instances when you saved your employer money;
- cases where you increased sales or quotas, or when you introduced a new product or service;
- ideas which were later accepted by your employer;
- major projects which you initiated.

Accounting / Finance

- Improved closing off from 10 to 7.5 working days.
- Increased billing cycle, resulting in cash flow increase of $95 000.
- Reduced accounts receivable by $35 000 with new credit and collection procedures.
- Reduced inventory by $420 000 by analysing turnover, distribution, and production time.
- Successfully liquidated for $178 000 property with appraisal value of $100 000.
- Identified and negotiated with new insurance broker for same cover for annual premium reduction of $80 000.
- Reduced annual recurring expenses by $180 000 through work simplifications, revised control procedures and staff reduction.

Receptionist / Telephonist

- Introduced new system for keeping record of customer inquiries, signed by member of sales staff accepting follow-up responsibility.

- Reorganised general files to enable slack reception/phone periods to be used for filing, so keeping it up to date on a daily basis.

Office Services Supervisor / Manager

- Integrated office services functions of four divisions into one department.

- Successfully managed relocation of equipment and 130 people to new premises.

- Negotiated and consolidated stationery purchases with $8 000 savings in first year.

Administrative Assistant / Executive Secretary

- Led project team in word processing feasibility study.

- Wrote secretarial practices manual for the marketing division.

- Organised relocation of staff and equipment to new premises.

- Hosted directors' lunches and dinners.

Architecture

- Managed projects, developed building plans and negotiated with sub-contractors for $85 million worth of construction.

Data Processing

- Saved $122 000 annually in accounts department through computer applications for payroll and quarterly budgets.
- Reduced staff turnover with job enrichment programme.
- Implemented on-line billing system which cleared $95 000 unbilled backlog.

Engineering: Chemical / Design / Electrical

- Created a polyurethane base plastic scouring pad.
- Designed and developed three new (patented) control systems.
- Successfully installed package power systems for offshore drilling platforms.

Production Control

- Reduced reject-recycling time by 15 per cent.
- Developed internal controls which saved $55 000 in material wastage from work-in-progress.
- Established an overall master schedule to monitor contract status with 280 customers.

Distribution / Warehousing

- Redesigned warehouse facilities which increased completed order processing by 15 per cent per day.
- Negotiated freight rate concession which reduced operating expenses by 16 per cent in first year.

General Management

- Managed post-completion audit for company's $12 million acquisition of Abco Bakery Pty Ltd.
- Increased sales revenue by 280 per cent in two years.
- In one year, $225 000 capital investment in equipment netted $180 000 in direct labour costs.
- Saved $230 000 by trimming product line. Attained returns on investment up to 35 per cent per annum.
- Improved average return on assets from 27 per cent to 38.5 per cent.

Inventory Control

- Reduced total inventory by $124 000 while processing.
- Built inventory turnover from 4.8 to [illegible] times per year through effective controls.
- Designed new perpetual inventory control plan which reduced write-offs by $85 000.

Banking / Finance

- Reduced bad debt write-offs from 8 to 3 per cent.
- Recovered $45 000 previously written off, without use of collection agency.
- Built branch to profitability two years ahead of projections.

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Legal / Tax

- Saved $130 000 over two years by renegotiating patent licences.

- Saved $118 000 for a client in a tax referral issue before the review board.

Maintenance

- Reduced lost time on repair work by 35 per cent.

- Started as a mechanic and promoted to service manager in 4.5 years.

Personnel Management / Industrial Relations

- Reduced direct labour turnover from 33 to 14 per cent within 18 months.

- Conducted total revision of salary administration policy and review practices.

- Managed the successful introduction of semi-autonomous work teams in packaging department.

- Reduced cost-per-hire rate from $1 120 to $800 within 12 months.

Plant Management

- Implemented plant process control equipment resulting in $53 000 raw materials savings in nine months.

- Reduced direct labour by 12 per cent and concurrently achieved 19 per cent productivity increase.

Sales

- Achieved first or second ranking in eight promotional campaigns over two years.
- Increased interview rate by 28 per cent and closure rate by 33 per cent.
- Market penetration was increased by restructuring sales territories—8 per cent increase in 18 months.
- Exceeded sales quota by more than 20 per cent in three consecutive years.

If the task of writing up your employment experience is proving frustrating, try to isolate three major facts you learnt from each of your past job titles and the tasks you carried out. It is often easier to describe your past employment when this is done.

> ☛ *Claim only those achievements in which you had a direct involvement, otherwise an interviewer may reject your application when questioning you.*

Business people are conditioned to read data expressed in quantities. Use numerics to illustrate your past, i.e. number of subordinates, units of production, capital expenditure. Be careful not to be indiscreet. If you reveal too much about the financial aspects of a previous employer, it could cause concern that you may treat sensitive competitive information of your prospective employer in the same way.

Your value to your next employer is the successful actions you took in the past which helped to increase sales, profit, production, quality, services, reduced costs or improved efficiency.

Presentation of résumé

Make sure your job application letter and résumé arrives on the recipient's desk looking neater than others. Do not use carbon copies of your résumé. A carbon copy gives the impression that the neater, more impressive original has gone to another employer and this one is your second preference.

Use an envelope size which does not necessitate folding your résumé or covering letter.

Résumé uses

Don't discard your résumé when your job search is over. It took considerable effort and time to produce and, as a 'word picture' of your life, your résumé has other uses:

- additional documentation for a loan request to a bank, building society or finance company;
- applications for membership of professional associations, sporting or social clubs, or community service organisations, such as Apex or Rotary;
- submissions to promotion review boards if they are a feature of your employment environment;
- attachment to a manuscript you have written and submitted for publication;
- promoting yourself to organisers of seminars as a lecturer or conference speaker, obtaining additional income in the process;

- an example for friends starting their job search campaigns to help in the design of their résumés.

Vary the approach

If you're applying for a job in a creative field, such as advertising, fashion, publishing, graphic design or the performing arts, then a different style of smartly packaged résumé can show your originality. It's usually a mistake, however, to send an offbeat style of résumé to more conservative employers. Instead, let your credentials speak for themselves.

To increase your chances of securing job interviews, there are ways other than the typed résumé that you might explore. With thorough preparation and good cost control you could produce a slide-narrative employment application, an audio-cassette job-seeking package, or a video résumé. These may be relevant when job searching in the media, entertainment, hospitality or publishing industries.

Slide-narrative application

The slide-narrative technique is a collection of slides with either a typed or audio narrative. The purpose of the presentation is to demonstrate intangibles that those responsible for recruiting often read in résumés and hear about in job interviews, but do not normally get a chance to observe. Skills and achievements that cannot be demonstrated effectively in a typed résumé can be documented in the form of slides.

To facilitate a good slide presentation you should label, number and place each one in a plastic slide sheet, this enables easy identification and selection for viewing purposes by a prospective employer. If you have previously taken slides of some of your career experiences, you need only to select these and put them in a suitable order, but if not, you will need to list the skills, accom-

plishments and achievements that you plan to include in your slide presentation.

If you are not a good photographer, perhaps you have a friend or associate who is—and you will obviously need a helper if you are to appear in any of the shots yourself. Most cameras are capable of shooting quality slides. The 35 mm camera is the most efficient one to use and can be effective in many situations without a flash. Many have 'electric eyes' which will ensure a proper exposure.

Television and film viewing have made us all quite sophisticated about the visual media, so select slide pictorials which are active and show you doing something. If you want to portray a skill which will require more than 10 seconds of explanation, make sure you have enough pictures to cover it. Have the photographer shoot more than enough, changing perspective, position, distance and focus of attention frequently. If there is an audience, have the photographer record their reaction.

Obviously, detailed planning must be done before the shooting. The photographer must clearly understand the important points of the pictorials in order to stage and document them in an attractive and effective way.

If recording an audio narrative to accompany the slides, you will want your voice and pictures to correspond. First, make sure the numbers and labels are in the same position on each slide. This will help prevent a slide being shown right side up but back to front. Second, there is a supplementary piece of equipment called a slide-tape programmer, which is helpful in developing a smooth, professional presentation. It allows you to record your narrative and place an inaudible tone on the cassette tape to make a slide change to the next one.

Slides can demonstrate to others examples of your skills in many areas—graphic design, public speaking, visual arts, interviewing, or chairing meetings.

The audio-cassette package

While the quality of the sound is important in a slide presentation, it will be even more crucial when it is all you have, as in the audio-cassette job-seeking presentation.

The audio-cassette tape can be a recording of lessons taught, meetings conducted, performances given, or any other demonstration efforts which provide evidence of your competencies. Tapes can be excellent samples of your ability to perform certain tasks.

The tape should begin with an introduction that includes your name and a description of the content of the tape, followed by the actual narrative content. Each tape should be labelled and enclosed in a transparent cassette case.

A training officer's audio-cassette tape would include the person's name, a description of the training process, the objectives of the tuition, the instructional activities in which participants will be involved, and an evaluation of the training. A prospective lawyer's audio-cassette tape might take the form of a mock trial and include an introduction, the actual trial, an evaluation of the trial by a lawyer or law lecturer. Similarly, a journalist could have an introduction, an interview, and an evaluation of the interview. A sales representative's tape could introduce a typical sales presentation and then give the actual presentation.

For practice, outline the contents of an audio-cassette tape in your field using these notes as a guide, but should you want to develop your presentation differently, do so as long as you include the basic suggested content.

When choosing your recording equipment, avoid built-in microphones. They don't discriminate adequately between sounds, and passing traffic may overpower your voice. Try to use a directional microphone and record in a room with good acoustics. Carpets and drapes and other soft things make a good sound-record-

ing environment, while a place like a bathroom is bad. The room should be sheltered from external noise as much as possible. A recording studio is, obviously, the best place, if you have access to one.

Of course, you won't be able to control all these things if you are recording events on location, but good sound is even more important on location because there are more potential audio distractions. Again, use a directional microphone if possible and stay close to it. Have someone monitor your voice audio-levels.

It may be necessary to have the location tape edited and transferred to a second tape with your introduction and summary. If so, have this done directly. Do not try to copy one tape on to another with an open mike. Attach a patch cord to the output or earphone outlet and run it to a direct input on the second machine. Consumer stereo equipment has become very sophisticated and most machines today have what is needed to do this. Sound that is indistinct, blurred or difficult to understand puts a great strain on a listener, and before long the mind of the target listener will begin to wander. If your tape is not crisp and clear, it may do more harm than good.

You may want to provide a written transcript which the recipient can follow with either the sound-narrative presentation or the audio-cassette method.

Naturally, as in the usual typed résumé approach, your personal standards of presentation must be of a high quality. These extra efforts could well impress employers and earn you an advantage in today's competitive job-seeking scene.

The video résumé

Most of us assume that all résumés, particularly our own, are evaluated equally in competition with others. Such is seldom the case, unfortunately.

Most employers and management consultants skim each résumé as they quickly sort applications into

'possibles' and 'rejects'. Possibles receive a second reading. Rejects are precisely that. The decisions are frequently based as much on emotion as on logic.

There is a direct correlation between the time an employer spends evaluating your résumé and your chances of being invited for an interview. One way to achieve the desired amount of attention, enlarge the span and impact of the evaluation, and distinguish your application from all the others is to send them a videotape.

Let's suppose that with your written résumé you enclose a videotape of yourself. If the tape is five to ten minutes long, then you have obtained that much more of the employer's time. This means you get a fairer hearing which substantially improves your chances of receiving an interview invitation.

Why can this be said so confidently? In the first instance, simply because it is a novel approach. Secondly, because the receiver knows that a videotape will convey important information about you that is impossible to convey on paper. A videotape cannot guarantee you interviews, but you will probably be given more thorough consideration than would otherwise be the case. The fact that you have gone to the effort to communicate with the employer in this way distinguishes you favourably from the other applicants.

The interview on videotape should show a prospective employer:

- how you communicate your ideas;
- your personality and presentation skills;
- how you react in an interview, which many consider a stressful situation;
- what you look like and the tonal quality of your voice.

Your on-camera interviewer should be experienced both in the conduct of interviews and in helping others convey a genuine impression of themselves. The questions asked should be similar to those you would expect from an employer conducting an interview with you face-to-face. The content of your video résumé should focus the attention of the intended viewer on your key employable skills.

An employer's concentration may be distracted by unconventional dress, so err on the conservative side. For technical reasons, avoid clothing which is bright red, yellow or green, or has fine geometrical stripes or patterns, such as hound's-tooth checks. Don't wear all white or all black clothing. The best colours for video production are mid-blue or dark blue, or beige through to brown.

At the conclusion of the interview, the necessary graphics and credits should be added by the video production technical staff and your tape duplicated in whatever format and quantity you have authorised. The innovation you demonstrate in producing a video résumé could be that special action which shortens your search for alternative employment.

3 Preparing job search correspondence

Preparing your résumé disciplines you to evaluate yourself thoroughly. This thinking and evaluating is good preparation for writing the covering letter. One should not repeat the other. The résumé summarises your career using selected parts of your past relevant to your employment goal; the covering letter points out how you are matched with the vacancy and are qualified to be considered.

Objectives

It is not unusual for 80 replies to be received in response to an advertisement. Often the first to be discarded are the bulky job applications containing irrelevant information, with many attachments, frequently photocopied. The less bulky are sorted according to their ability to interest the reader within the few seconds devoted to reading each one.

Your covering letter needs to get attention quickly; to state clearly specific points of suitability for the vacancy; to give sufficient evidence to be convincing; and to ask for action, i.e. an interview. Although the same résumé can be sent to a number of prospective employers in photocopied or laser-printed form, each job application requires its own individual covering letter. Each letter must be a delicate balance between self-confidence and modesty—a balance so many applicants fail to achieve.

A job application letter provides many advantages. It allows you to take your time to develop a clear con-

vincing message. You can think slowly and carefully so that you communicate with an employer in just the right way. You can organise the points in an order that seems most likely to interest the employer.

Compose imaginary letters

Poor writing can lower the quality of your employment application. Practise your writing skills *before* you apply to possible employers. Write to a friend about why you believe you should be hired. Say what you value in this kind of work; describe your best claims for consideration; and discuss with your friend their reaction to what you wrote. By writing to a friend, you will probably have avoided phrases and words which sound pompous or awkward. The same rules apply to job application correspondence.

Here is another recommendation. Your writing style will become more interesting if you dictate letters on to a cassette recorder, replay and listen to what you said and how you said it. If you use words that you do not normally use in conversation, your application letters will be stilted and formal. Such letters irritate the reader rather than impress. They discourage the recipient from wanting to meet you.

Time spent practising writing skills and composing application letters will bring rewards for your efforts. The job application letters you are sending at the moment may be the reason you are not being invited to as many selection interviews as you believe you merit.

Quality control your letters

Misspelling, poor grammar, unclear handwriting, even low-quality stationery will reduce your chances, however qualified or experienced you may be. First impressions are very important. It's unlikely that you will have a second chance with the same employer. If an advertiser seeks five years' experience, then state that

you have five, even if you have ten. Don't risk rejection by appearing over-qualified in your job application correspondence.

Employers are interested in what you can do for them—how you can solve their problems. Writers of job application letters who communicate only what they want from an employer are less likely to be invited for an interview. You need to state your abilities and arrange them in an impressive, convincing manner. The best way to provide this evidence is to describe your abilities by giving examples of what you have achieved for past employers. Write about a problem you helped to solve.

Prepare a number of drafts. I have composed hundreds of recruitment advertisements—and every one was written and rewritten. Your letter in response to an advertisement should be written with the same care.

You want to stimulate the reader to the point where the person thinks: 'I want to see this candidate. This applicant looks as if they can do something for me.' Your objective is to win that invitation to be interviewed.

Analyse advertisements

Many job seekers fail to obtain interviews because they make mistakes when responding to advertisements. Some just notice the job title and hurriedly post an application. Every advertisement should be read and carefully analysed. This will help in the preparation of a letter which will state the relevance of your background to the employer's needs. Though you may be attaching a comprehensive résumé, your job application letter should highlight your best points and relate them to the advertisement.

The clues to key points for your covering letter, the likely questions at an interview and the base data for more research about your potential employer are contained in most recruitment advertisements. Don't be

deterred if you don't think you have all the requirements specified. A well-constructed job application is still likely to win you an interview.

A common fault of applicants is to apologise for not having all the specified requirements, rather than emphasising those they do have. Another is to ignore the key requirements stated in the advertisement and send in a standard letter of such a general nature that the recipient wonders whether the advertisement has been read.

Advertisements are designed to test certain qualities in applicants, upon which the writer of the advertisement places a high priority. You may disagree with some of the expressed requirements but, if you really want to secure an interview, you must isolate them from the rest of the advertisement and write your letter to address them specifically.

A common failing is to write the covering letter without the advertisement beside you. A useful step, which will improve your chances, is to analyse the advertisement in detail, noting its key points. To emphasise your eligibility for consideration, prepare your covering letter making sure that these requirements are listed and matched by the experience in your résumé.

Very often application letters receive only a quick glance as the recipient scans the many likely to have been received. The reader will look for the answers to these key requirements before deciding whether to read the rest of the application. The inability to respond to what has been stated in the advertisement is a reason why many job seekers fail to secure interviews.

You may find that your background does not precisely match the majority of the key requirements in your original list. This is no reason to abandon your application. An applicant who demonstrates thoughtfulness and care in their covering letter and includes evidence of meeting at least three of the requirements is often invited to an interview.

Analysis of Advertisement

Date of Advert _____
Publication _____
Advert Job Title _____
Employer _____

Requirements in Advert * Rating	Specifics from my Career Record which match
1 ( )	
2 ( )	
3 ( )	
4 ( )	
5 ( )	
6 ( )	

Additional data obtained from other sources (Business Directories, etc.)	Specifics from my Career Record which match
1 ( )	
2 ( )	
3 ( )	
4 ( )	

* Rating: Show order of apparent importance to the employer—*not* to you, the job seeker.

Gaining attention

The first sentence is the most important and often the most difficult to compose. There are a number of alternative approaches. You could use the name of someone in their employ, or state the source of your awareness of the vacancy, or present your most outstanding qualification. One of the most dependable ways of getting attention is to introduce in this first sentence the qualities you have that are the most necessary for the vacancy.

Consider selecting from the various styles which follow, and amend to suit the particular situation:

- Mr John Tucker of your Marketing Department has told me of your search for a competent Research Officer.

- When you need a Secretary who can type 75 words per minute, operate a PC and organise events at short notice, please call me.

- Having completed four years' study in electrical engineering, I feel that I am now ready to perform effectively in your firm.

- My experience and education match the requirements mentioned in your recent advertisement in *The Herald*.

- A position in your organisation is my goal. My résumé shows . . .

- Challenge and the chance for further advancement are what I seek in your employ following ten years in your industry.

Reference to business magazine articles, annual reports or newspaper reports are useful openings. However you seek attention in the first sentence, you must follow with supporting claims for consideration in summary form.

Don't launch into a historical account of past experience. The recipient is primarily interested in the phase of your experience most related to the vacancy. Few readers will believe you are prepared for the job simply because you state you feel qualified or *are sure* you have the necessary qualifications. Choose facts from your background and give enough details to be convincing. If you say you have been successful, record why. If you have attended a significant training course related to the vacancy, state the most important thing you learned from it.

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When responding to advertised vacancies, your letter should be addressed *by name* to the person responsible for screening applications. If the name has been provided the task is easy. If not, make a telephone call to the switchboard operator of the prospective employer and obtain the name, correct spelling and position title. Many applicants neglect this important courtesy. Most recipients of job applications are very conscious of their job titles.

Salary

To discuss salary in your covering letter will almost certainly jeopardise an interview invitation. So avoid any mention of current or expected salary. By leaving it until the interview you also increase your chances of negotiating a good offer.

Advertisers place applicants in an awkward position if salary expectations are requested before the full details of the job are known. Resist such a request until you have a chance to discuss the job requirements at an interview. Otherwise, you run the risk of starting at a salary less than you deserve or placing yourself beyond consideration by mentioning too high a figure.

Employers have access to many reliable surveys of the 'market rates' of different occupations. You should make sure you also have a reliable source for assessing your market rate. This is not easy to accomplish. Many remuneration surveys are restricted for sale to members of employer associations—some are too expensive for one person to purchase.

If you have an acquaintance or friend in a personnel job, ask for an appraisal of your salary worth from data to which this person has access. Don't rely on scanning pay levels quoted in recruitment advertisements—they are an unreliable source for an appraisal of your value to an employer.

Tone of your letter

Tone, in speaking or writing, conveys our attitude towards our listener or reader. Every time we speak or write we exhibit not only meaning but also tone. Quite often it is the tone of our communication rather than its literal meaning that has the greater effect, good or bad. The tone you choose depends on two things: the person to whom you are writing; and your purpose in writing.

The first thing to do before you write a letter is to imagine who the reader is, if you do not know already. Try to visualise the person, to understand this person's outlook. You are more likely to get your message across if you tailor it to their likely mental and emotional state.

The next step is to be quite clear about why you are writing. Do you want a telephone call? Or a written reply? When you have your objectives about what you want the reader to do clearly in your mind, you will write a better letter.

You are more likely to succeed in your job application correspondence by being courteous and tactful. Courtesy is consideration for the feelings and attitudes of others. The courteous writer realises that the reader has feelings and avoids offending them. Don't go to the other extreme of being so friendly that you sound insincere. This mistake is common in application letters.

If you want the reader to invite you for an interview, state this; if you prefer to have your application filed for future openings, say so. The final paragraph is the appropriate place to define the action you want.

The next point may sound ludicrous but I've noticed it so many times—don't forget to sign your name and type your name under your signature.

Presentation

Your job search correspondence should be typed. It will be read by people who are used to reading typewritten

material. While your handwriting may appear clear to you, that's no guarantee it will be to others.

Try to avoid folding the letter. Your objective is for your application to look better than others in all respects. Buy A4 size envelopes and pay the small extra postage to ensure your application is received uncreased and neat in appearance.

The model letter

The following illustrates the way an acceptable business letter should be produced.

43 Camelia Crescent
MOORABBIN 3189

Tel: (03) 481.3927

28 May 1991

Ms W J Marsh
Personnel Manager
ABC Company Pty Ltd
201 Albert Road
SOUTH MELBOURNE 3205

Dear Ms Marsh

Employment Application Letters

I am happy to give you advice in answer to your letter. Your inquiry regarding the layout of employment application letters is illustrated in this reply. The layout demonstrated is one of many that could be adopted; I have chosen it because it is simple and efficient and, I believe, results in letters of attractive appearance which convey the impression of a person who takes care to do things correctly. The structure and style of business letters should be those of good composition in general.

The following points, which I feel deserve your attention, are important in achieving results.

1 Notice that each paragraph is quite short. Sentences are not long. The spelling is correct. There are no erasures, corrections or smudges on the surface of the letter.

2 The addresses of the writer and the intended recipient are typed in full. No abbreviations are used except for 'Pty Ltd'. There is no doubt as to where the letter is to be delivered. The recipient's title is placed immediately below their name. Note that the State does not need to be added when a postcode is included in the address.

3 All employment application letters should be typed. The reader is likely to be a busy person who may discard those letters which are difficult to read and turn to those which are easier.

4 The first sentence of the letter should clearly state your subject and purpose. The letter must above all be efficient as a communication. Therefore you must let your reader know what letter is about as quickly as you can. You will notice that I have used a *subject line* for this purpose, immediately after the greeting. Many people, however, feel that a subject line is superfluous because its contents are nearly always repeated in the first paragraph of the letter. Either way is acceptable.

5 If a long paragraph can properly be divided in two, it should be. This helps comprehension.

6 Paragraphs may be numbered if you want to draw the reader's attention to the number and sequence of the topics being dealt with, or to provide a ready means of later reference.

7 The body of the letter begins two lines below the subject line. If it becomes necessary to continue on a second page, the correct procedure is to repeat the recipient's name at the top, and add the page number and the date.

8 The tone of the letter is particularly important. The words you choose convey your attitude to the reader. The tone must be appropriate to the purpose for which the letter is written.

9 Cliches or business jargon should be avoided. All too often they are unnecessary and can be replaced by shorter phrases in plain English. Here are some examples of business jargon which should be avoided.

In reply wish to state	Please be advised
Thanking you in advance	The undersigned
Under even date	Under separate cover

10 The complimentary close should be typed two lines below the body of the letter. Notice its position. Previously, the accepted style was that if you had addressed your letter by name to the intended reader, you used 'Yours sincerely'; if it was addressed to a position, you used 'Yours faithfully'. However, 'Yours sincerely' is now generally used in both situations.

11 Allow plenty of space for your signature and type your name under it. Notice how mention is made of an enclosure with your letter. (In this case, it refers to your résumé.)

Yours sincerely

Chris Carter

Enc.

Checklist before you post your job application letter

		✓ Yes	No
1	I have checked the correct spelling of the employer's name and address.	❑	❑
2	I have written the correct job title of the likely recipient.	❑	❑
3	I have indicated evidence of research about the prospective employer.	❑	❑
4	I have written only information about me which is correct.	❑	❑
5	The tone of my letter indicates self-confidence without boasting.	❑	❑
6	I have avoided jargon and technical terms.	❑	❑
7	I have avoided any negative remarks about myself.	❑	❑
8	I haven't mentioned my salary expectations.	❑	❑
9	I haven't written about my hobbies.	❑	❑
10	I have recorded when I am available for interview and how I can be contacted.	❑	❑
11	I have indicated that my résumé is enclosed.	❑	❑
12	I have asked for action in the last paragraph.	❑	❑
13	I have shown my letter to others and sought their opinion.	❑	❑
14	My letter has been typed.	❑	❑
15	I have typed my name below my signature.	❑	❑
16	I have signed it.	❑	❑
17	My letter is no longer than one page.	❑	❑
18	The envelope is correctly addressed and has my address on the back.	❑	❑
19	I have kept a copy for my job search record file.	❑	❑
20	I have noted in my job search record file the date of mailing.	❑	❑

Follow-up letters

A thankyou letter is a very useful way of making a second contact with a person you have met. The chances are that you will be the only applicant to write one. Your letter will bring you again into the thoughts of the person involved and, by its politeness, influence the emotional part of their attitudes and decision making. Your name will stand out from the people the interviewer has recently met, or the stack of written job applications possibly received. Your thoughtful action will result in extra attention, though the letter took so little time to write and cost so little to post. Writing a thankyou letter is not only an act of courtesy, it is basic commonsense because it advances your particular claims for consideration for employment.

But it's not an easy letter to compose. Prepare several drafts until you are satisfied with the contents. Show your letter to another person and seek comments before you post it.

Thanking people we meet during the job search reinforces the things we said, provides an opportunity to add information we forgot to communicate at the time and shows our understanding of the importance of good relationships with others. It also prompts the receiver to do something about the conversation you had.

Thankyou letters can be sent to people to whom you have been referred for advice, to employment agency staff, career counsellors, recruitment officers who have acknowledged receipt of your application or who have interviewed you—in fact, to any person who has put aside time to listen to your employment concerns and aspirations. The best self-discipline is to write your follow-up thankyou letters each evening to people you met during the day.

Waiting for people to write or telephone you with news of any action they may have taken as a result of meeting you is often a wearing experience. Not knowing whether people are taking the action they promised

prolongs your feelings of uncertainty. Writing thankyou letters is valuable therapy, because it involves you in taking positive action rather than being idle, waiting.

After a job interview, most job applicants ignore the psychological advantage to be obtained from an effective follow-up letter. Most await, with different degrees of anxiety, the good or bad news. A follow-up letter which expresses appreciation for the interview opportunity is a good strategy because it:

- confirms that you still want the job;
- reasserts your claim that you can handle it;
- keeps your name prominent with the recipient;
- gives you an edge over other candidates;
- flatters the self-esteem of the interviewer(s).

Many competitors for a job neglect this opportunity. A simple expression of gratitude could decide the case in your favour, particularly if you refer to a significant fact from the interview. The following example reminds the interviewer who you are and reinforces your claim to be the most suitable person for the job.

Follow-up letter

I was very encouraged by our discussions yesterday about retail management. Following considerable reflection about the complexity of this industry, I am keen to contribute wherever you think appropriate within your organisation. The problems you outlined have common features with my recent experiences in which I achieved success solving similar problems.

I look forward to hearing from you again soon.

Yes—more job search correspondence

Responding to advertised vacancies and composing follow-up correspondence are unlikely to be the only letters you will need to write during your job search. Consider the following. It could be a helpful activity for you to draft letters for these purposes in advance of needing to mail them:

Pre-Application Research

- Letter to Referee with Résumé
- Networking Letter to Personal Contact
- Networking Request for Research Interview
- Request for Research Interview
- Thankyou Following Research Interview

Applications

- Application Following Retrenchment
- Unsolicited Application to Employers
- Unsolicited Application to Recruitment Consultants
- Response to Advertisements — Private Sector Employer
- Response to Advertisements — Public Sector Employer
- Response to Advertisements — Recruitment Consultants
- Search for Temporary or Freelance Work
- To Prospective Employer Following Article in Magazine or Newspaper
- To Prospective Employer Following Network Referral

Follow-Up

- Application Progress Inquiry
- Interview Follow-Up Letters

Job Search Conclusion

Accepting an Employment Offer Declining an Employment Offer Delaying Acceptance of Offer Thanking Job Search Helpers

Written versus telephone job applications

Unless the advertised vacancy specifies it, try to avoid telephone applications. The written job application is a much better means of introducing yourself. You needn't worry about nervously stumbling through opening remarks. You can take as much time as you need to communicate the right things in the best way you can. You can communicate without being interrupted. With your job application before them, employers acquire knowledge about you at their convenience when they have set aside time to review their mail. With your careful structuring and design, they get the impression you want them to obtain.

During your job searching, use of the telephone is unavoidable. Remember that attitudes are everything, especially on the telephone. Your voice and your words are just as powerful they are in person. All of us like to make guests feel welcome at our home. We treat them well and want them to feel good about their contact with us. Using the telephone should not be any different. Making telephone calls really puts us in the role of host or hostess, and we should adopt the same tone of hospitality as we would in person.

Your tone of voice tells a lot about your attitudes. However despondent you feel, try not to allow this to affect your tone. Cold or curt responses do not belong in a telephone conversation. Instead, communicate most effectively by adopting a helpful and pleasant approach.

Remember the cardinal rule of a successful telephone call—don't hang up before the other person does. That

'click' or sudden emptiness can put a damper on an otherwise effective phone conversation. Take that extra second or two to ensure that your conversation has maximum impact.

It is much easier to get good results using the telephone if you are well organised in advance. Begin by asking yourself these questions:

- What good things can happen as a result of making this telephone call?
- What benefits can I indicate to my prospect to gain their interest?
- What objections can I anticipate?
- How can I handle objections?
- How will I arrange for the appointment?

Then prepare yourself for making the telephone calls. Remember, you have only about 30 seconds to establish yourself as a confident, professional, articulate person. Pick a quiet time when you'll get no interruptions. Clear your table of everything else. Possibly place a mirror in front of you to remind yourself to smile. The more you smile, the more confident and friendly you will sound to the listener.

Application forms

Resist becoming annoyed if your recipient sends you a blank application form to complete, following receipt of your carefully prepared job application correspondence. The larger the employer, the more likely this is to happen. Fill in the extra data items on the form, staple another copy of your résumé to it and post or courier back. Many questions on application forms will seem unnecessary. Due to poor design there will be insuffi-

cient space to record your answers neatly; the form is likely to arrive crushed or creased through use of too small an envelope. Some questions will seem totally irrelevant or impertinent. If you want the job, persevere!

But don't think you have to answer every question. Where you are concerned that your answer may risk eliminating you from further consideration, enter 'To be discussed at interview'. This action may risk your being asked that question later, but by that stage you will have achieved the objective of securing an interview. In fact, many have said to me that, when they have left a question unanswered on these forms, it has passed by without comment at subsequent discussions with the prospective employer.

You may arrive for an interview and be required to complete an application before you meet the interviewer. It is easy to become annoyed at this stage, which may affect your interview performance. Often the questions on the form require answers you have already provided. There is often a feeling of panic or urgency. Also, you are usually expected to fill in the form in a reception area with distractions such as telephones ringing and people passing by.

One way to combat irritation in these circumstances is to prepare an Application Form Response Data Sheet at the beginning of your job search in the privacy and quiet of your own home. Take this data sheet wherever you travel on your job search so that when confronted with a blank employment application form you can readily transfer the relevant information. As you come across application form questions to which you have not prepared an answer, add them to your data sheet so that, on the next occasion, your answer can be easily provided. A set of pens and a stiff folder on which you can place the form when completing it are additional aids you should carry which will help maintain your composure, allowing you to focus clearly on completing the task accurately and without consuming too much time.

A growing practice in employment application form design is to provide a blank section where you are expected to record your ambitions, reasons for applying or your views on your accomplishments. For example:

> You are invited to give a brief description of your scholastic and business career to date. Points which might be included are: main interests you have developed; the achievements which you are particularly proud of; and the ideas and ambitions you have for the future.

You need to be ready for this situation. Prepare a twelve-line draft at the beginning of your job search. Review and revise it until you are satisfied that you are likely to make a good impression with your response. Be careful to sound neither pompous nor too humble. Don't write about money or desire for job security. If you do not need to copy this material on to an employment application form, your effort will not be wasted as you will find the exercise useful in helping you state your case at interview discussions.

> ☛ *Check whether you are ready to be interviewed by writing your responses to the following questions.*

I have decided upon the following:

What responsibilities? _____

_____

Using which of my preferred skills? _____

_____

By what job titles are these tasks called? _____

_____

In what kind of organisation? _____

_____

With what kinds of problems to be solved? _____

_____

With what type of manager? _____

_____

What job location—commuting requirements? _____

_____

What must remuneration package include? _____

_____

Which are my most important non-tangible benefits I need to be satisfied in my work?

_____

JOB SEEKING IN TOUGH TIMES

- Résumé Revision
- Research
- Paper Work
- Telephone Calls
- Information Interviews
- Networking
- Reading
- Developing Marketing Plan
- Identifying Contacts
- Copying Materials
- Mailing Lists Assembly
- Selection Interviews

4 The interview

I'm frequently astonished, annoyed and saddened to read advice in books, pamphlets or magazines about selection interviews which bears little relationship to what really happens. Often the recommendations appear to describe an 'ideal' interview situation. The writers reveal in their advice, without intending to, that they have not actually interviewed applicants for a job or been responsible for selection decisions.

Though I have interviewed a large number of applicants over many years, it would be presumptuous to claim that I know it all. What follows is drawn from my personal experiences and also from a much wider field—the experiences of the many hundreds of job seekers whom I have de-brieted in my counselling business, plus numerous conversations with my colleagues in both the placement industry and the personnel management profession. The advice which follows is a compendium of what really works well for an applicant and what jeopardises the likelihood of an employment offer. Let's start by establishing some home truths about interviews:

- Employment offers are more often made to people the interviewer likes than to people who are most suitable for the real tasks of the position. Therefore, your objective is to get your interviewer to like you. You don't necessarily have to like the interviewer. That is unimportant, unless the interviewer is going to be your superior.

- The personal chemistry between interviewer and applicant will influence the hiring decision far more than the applicant's qualifications, exam results or record of work experiences.

- The manner in which you respond to questions is far more important than the content of your reply.

- Job seekers who answer only 'Yes' or 'No' usually have a higher failure rate than those who reply to each question with two or more sentences.

- The interviewer needs to feel that your respect is being acquired while questioning you. The way to accomplish this is to be a keen listener, wear an interested smile and agree where appropriate. Interviewers are more interested in themselves than in you. Your ability to cater for their needs will influence their attitude positively towards you as the chosen applicant.

- In 21 years of interviewing, I terminated many interviews early and rejected the job seeker when the applicant revealed no preparation, no rehearsal, no purpose and no goals, even though the written credentials were well prepared. Many interviewers behave this way for the same reasons.

- Selection interviews don't differ much from all other social engagements in one important respect. When a person meets another for the first time a 'like', 'don't like' or 'maybe' decision is made silently by both. First impressions do influence the interviewer, however thoroughly the person may have been taught in interviewing training to avoid them. Your efforts should go into making the greeting process a friendly

one, whatever the initial behaviour of the interviewer.

- Many people are poorly trained at conducting interviews and use the situation to talk more about themselves than to learn about you. Don't reveal your irritation. Your task is to help the interviewer focus on those areas in which your skills are relevant to the vacancy.

- Your non-verbal behaviour, i.e. the movements you use consciously or subconsciously during an interview, are signals which show what you are really feeling. They can lose you an employment opportunity in spite of your careful use of words. Try to rehearse interviews with two other people, one to ask questions and one to note your body language. Or, even better, be filmed during your practice sessions and note carefully what the replay reveals about the movements of your head, arms, hands, legs, shoulders and feet.

- People who convey to the interviewer that they can solve problems are hired in preference to those who discuss their problems.

- No interviewer is really interested in what you want, until interest is created in what you can offer.

- Most questions an interviewer asks seek 'negatives' in your background or personal style. Anticipate this and practise providing two answers to every question. The second is to convey a positive feature of your candidature relevant to the vacancy and the nature of the employer, and to counteract the pursuit of reasons to decide 'no' by the interviewer.

- Most of the contents of an interview can be worked out in advance. Procedures, phrases, and even many of the interviewer's questions can be determined in advance. Hence, there is no excuse for avoiding rehearsing for selection interviews and relying on luck or thinking on your feet.

- An applicant impresses when more interest is shown in the tasks of the vacancy than in the pay or employment benefits.

- Interviewers are not just interested in your past work experiences, but whether you comment on what you learned from them.

- Most interviewers look forward to the phase in the interview when they can ask whether you have any questions. It gives them an opportunity to break away from what is often a rigidly structured format that they have followed hundreds of times before. Don't let the interviewer down by having no questions to ask. Stick to questions which matter and that you have prepared—not those designed simply to make you sound impressive.

- Always be positive in tone and content when you communicate with interviewers. Let the other person decide what is appropriate or deficient for the needs of the vacancy. Don't willingly help the interviewer to decide against you by apologising for anything—unless you arrive late for the appointment.

Here are several 'don'ts' about interview behaviour. I wouldn't take up your time with them if I didn't know from practical experience that they reduce your chances of success:

- Never shake hands limply.
- Never get too physically close to an interviewer.
- Never wear dark glasses during an interview.
- Never indicate that you are desperate for a job.
- Never criticise a former employer or boss.
- Never smell of garlic, alcohol or strong perfume.
- Never smoke, even if you are invited to do so.
- Never allow an expression of dislike to appear on your face or in your words.
- Never use the first name of the interviewer unless invited to do so.
- Never make jokes.
- Never talk about your domestic or financial problems.
- Never answer a question if you don't understand it or didn't hear it clearly. Ask politely for clarification.
- Never claim a skill without illustrating how you used it.
- Never fidget, scratch yourself or comment unfavourably about the furnishings or decor of the interview location.
- Never stay at an interview if you feel you have been insulted by the interviewer—no job is that important.

- Never bring into a selection interview room your mother, brother, wife, friend or lover—nobody should accompany you.

Causes of Rejection at an Interview

Study the list of key causes for applicant failure which follow. Think carefully about each point, and how you can avoid them applying to you.

- Poor manners.
- Inappropriate appearance.
- Talking too much.
- Talking too little.
- Knowing little about the employer.
- Being too modest about achievements.
- Nervous mannerisms.
- Unrealistic demands about:

  job content;

  career future;

  pay.
- Talking all about your needs—not those of the employer.

Interviewers are nervous too!

To win an employment offer, a job seeker needs to remove the fears every interviewer has. You may be surprised to learn that interviewers are nervous; only applicants are expected to be nervous at interviews. An interviewer will be unsure about whether you will be able to do the job, whether you will get along with other staff and whether you will stay in their employ for a long time. Try to feel more confident within yourself at interviews. Now you know that interviewers have fears as well, your attitude and answers to the interviewer's questions should focus on removing those fears. This is better than dwelling on how you feel yourself.

The way most interviewers try to remove their nervousness about these fears is to ask questions about your past. But no recruitment consultant or employer really cares about your past. The only thing the interviewer can possibly care about is your future. The questions about what you have done, how you felt, what behaviour you followed are all searching for clues as to how you would behave in their employ in the future. This information is needed to remove the interviewer's fears; the person is not asking simply to be nosy or personal.

Answer questions about your past in such a way that they convey an impression about how you will be—not how you were. This means mentioning the positive aspects—not the negative—about your past experiences.

☛ *Determine your pay and employment conditions BEFORE interviews. Write your answers to the following:*

- *What you need.*
- *What you want.*
- *What you would accept.*

Common interview situations

You may be concerned about who is likely to ask the questions. In medium to large organisations, you are likely to be interviewed by several people.

First, a member of the personnel division, then the supervisor to whom you would report, followed by the manager. Some employers ask you to have a discussion with your prospective co-workers. This can be most useful to your own assessment of the suitability of the job. On average, each discussion will be about 40 minutes long. This may sound as if there could be a confusing number of questions to be answered. In practice, this is not necessarily the case. It is highly likely that each interviewer will ask very similar questions—the most common of which will be:

- Why did you leave your last job? Or, why do you want to leave your current job?
- What did you like most (or least) about that job or employer?
- What do you think are your major achievements to date?
- What prompted you to apply for this position?
- What do you know about this organisation?

Several things may disturb you during interviews:

- telephone interruptions or other people coming into the office;
- a nervous interviewer, not used to interviewing;
- unclear questions. Don't hesitate to seek clarification of any question not fully understood;

- being placed in a seat where you are subjected to sun glare.

Unfortunately, all these happen quite frequently, so you should tolerate them without indicating annoyance or irritation.

You may need relaxation skills in order to perform effectively at interviews. There are many different methods: find the one that best suits you by reading Chapter 10.

Answering likely interview questions

Many people who have responsibility for recruitment and selection receive training in how to interview. Frequently, this training provides interviewers with a pattern of questions intended to obtain information from applicants in a structured form. Interviewer training is based on the view that past behaviour of people is usually reliable for predicting future behaviour. Obviously there are many exceptions to this rule—people do change. Yet many studies of applicants after hiring have produced evidence that those who were good leaders and showed good judgment in previous positions rarely lose their skills. Consequently, many interviewers structure questions so as to discover indicators in the applicant's past of future success in those areas considered important for effective performance in the vacant position.

An astute applicant will study the following questions—arranged under the characteristics they seek to measure—and rehearse answers before an interview. Naturally, the volume and nature of information sought will vary from position to position. Select those most likely to be asked for the position you are seeking. Write down your probable responses. Look over your answers and revise where you feel there is a need to improve. This process will help you to respond more confidently and clearly in the interview situation.

Remember, each question is an opportunity to promote yourself as the most appropriate candidate for the vacancy.

Oral communication skill

- Tell me about the preparation for and results of meetings you have been responsible for conducting.

Oral presentation skill

- Have you ever done any public or group speaking? Can you give me an example? Recently?
- What objectives were you trying to achieve? Were you successful?
- What kind of feedback did you get?

Written communication skill

- What kind of written proposals or submissions have you prepared? Give me an example.
- How did you approach it?
- Tell me about the content and the reaction when it was reviewed.

Energy

- What do you do with your spare time?
- What do you do for exercise?
- Give me some examples of projects or tasks on which you postponed immediate action. Why?

Career ambition

- What are your career goals for the next five years? How do you expect to accomplish your goals?
- What have you accomplished in the line of self-development during the past year?
- What was your career goal upon leaving university? How did you pursue that goal?

Creativity

- Can you think of a recent problem in which old solutions wouldn't work? How did you solve it?
- What is the most imaginative or innovative thing you have done in your present position?
- What kinds of problems have people recently called on you to solve?
- What do you do differently from your predecessors in the position?

Work standards

- In your position, how do you define doing a good job?
- How do you judge the performance of your staff? What distinguishes a good employee from an average employee?
- Do you have any subordinates? What kind of recognition do you give those who meet or exceed work standards?

- Have you ever dismissed an employee? What were the circumstances?

Risk taking

- Describe a recent decision which had more than the usual element of risk.

- Describe a situation in which you received a new procedure or instructions with which you disagreed. What did you do?

- Tell me about the most risky decision that you have made. What were the results?

Range of interests

- How do you keep informed about what's going on in other parts of the organisation?

- What is a particular article of interest that you have read recently?

- What is the most important change going on in the organisation?

Stress tolerance

- Under what conditions do you work best?

- Do you feel pressure in your job? How do you deal with it?

- How do you relax or get away from it all (relieve work tensions) after a hard day?

- How long can you be 'out on the road' before you become edgy with customers? What do you do about it?

- Do you find it necessary to take work home? How often? Why?

Sales ability / persuasiveness

- What was the best idea you ever sold to your superior? Why did this person approve it?

- Describe your most satisfying (or disappointing) experience in presenting an idea or proposal to top management and gaining their support.

- If you asked your subordinates to identify your greatest weakness, what would it be? How do you know they would respond that way?

- When selling an account, how do you determine when you are pushing too hard? How do you determine when you should back off?

Listening skills

- How good are your listening skills? How do you know?

Leadership

- What specifically do you do to set an example for your subordinates?

- What sort of leader do your subordinates feel you are? How do you know? Are you satisfied? What have you done about it?

- Have you ever led a task force, committee or any group that didn't report to you but from whom you had to get results? How did you do it?

- On what occasions have you involved your subordinates in helping you make a decision? Why?

Motivation for work

- What personal factors do you consider most important in evaluating your success?
- Why did you choose this career?
- Can you give me examples of experiences on the job that you felt were satisfying?
- What do you like least about your job?
- What has been the most important event in your career development?
- Who has been the most important person in your career development?

Tenacity

- What is a big obstacle you had to overcome to get where you are today? How did you overcome it?
- Can you describe an experience in which you felt you gained something because you persisted for a length of time?
- Describe a situation where you gave your all, but failed.
- It took you eight years to get your degree. Why?
- What university course or subject gave you the most trouble? What did you do about it?

- What was the biggest problem you encountered while completing your studies? How did you handle it?

Initiative

- Have you found any way to make your job easier or more rewarding?
- What new ideas have you put to your supervisor in the last six months?
- Which of your suggestions have been adopted in your department during the past year? How did you get it (them) accepted?
- What ideas would you like to see implemented in your organisation? Have you tried to sell these ideas? How did you go about it?
- What have you done recently to make your job more interesting (challenging, rewarding)?
- What did you do to prepare for this interview?

Independence

- When have you had to go against general feelings or policies to accomplish a goal? Tell me about it.
- Describe an incident in which you disagreed with your superior. How was it settled?
- Why did you go to the university you attended?
- What do you do in your job that isn't covered in the job description?

- What are the constraints on you in performing your job?

- Why did you decide to leave your most recent position? What considerations entered into this decision? What did you do?

- What kinds of decisions do you make in your present job? Give some examples of major decisions.

Planning and organisation

- How do you schedule your time? Set priorities?

- What is your procedure for keeping track of matters requiring your attention?

- How have you identified and overcome resistance to changes you have made in your organisation? Give examples.

- How do you plan your daily activities?

- What were your objectives for the last year? Were they achieved?

- What are your objectives for this year? Who else knows them? What are you doing to see that they are reached?

- Describe a typical day or week in your present position.

Management control

- What methods do you usually use to be kept informed of what is going on in your area of supervision?

- Does your organisation use management by objectives? If so, comment on its effectiveness.

- What performance appraisal procedures do you use for evaluating your subordinates?

- What paperwork do you feel is unnecessary?

- What new types of reporting patterns have you established with your manager and subordinates?

Decisiveness

- How do you go about making an important decision affecting your career?

- What kinds of decisions do you tend to make rapidly, and which ones do you take more time on? Give me some examples.

Integrity

- In order to make it in the world, people have to bend a little bit. What is the farthest you have had to bend your standards in order to succeed?

- Sometimes we have to bend the truth a little when dealing with a particularly difficult customer. Can you give me an illustration of an occasion when you have had to do that?

- Everyone has to break some rules sometimes. Can you give me an example of an occasion when you have had to do so?

Ability to learn

- The job sounds difficult. How did you learn the technical aspects of it? How long did it take you?

Judgment

- Can you give me two examples of good decisions you have made in the last six months? What were the alternatives? Why were they good decisions?

- In your job, what decision did you have to think the longest about before you decided what to do? Why was it difficult?

Development of subordinates

- What techniques do you find most useful in developing subordinates? How do you identify subordinates' needs and potential?

- Tell me about some of the people who have become successful as a result of your management.

- Describe each of your subordinates and tell me your goals for each.

Problem analysis

- What problems are you currently working on that came as a surprise to you? How much advance notice did you have of the problems?

- When did you realise the job was not as described? How did you find out?

- Describe the biggest problem that you have faced within the last six months. How did you handle it?

- What sources of information do you use to keep aware of problems within your department?

Resilience

- What was your biggest disappointment? How did you cope with it?

- How do you pick yourself up after a disappointment (or a turn down)?

Financial analytical ability

- How much involvement do you have in the financial decisions of the organisation? What specifically is your role? What kinds of data do you use in making the decisions?

- What is the toughest problem that you have faced in the job?

Adaptability

- How was your transition from high school to university? Any particular problems?

- The new assignment certainly is a great deal different from what you were doing before. How do you like it? How long did it take you to learn the new area?

- There would seem to me to be a great deal of difference between working for private industry and working for government. Can you tell me about these differences? Any problems adapting? How did you overcome the problems?

Organisational sensitivity

- How do events in your area of the organisation affect other parts of the organisation? Please give explicit examples.

- Let's go over the organisation chart that you drew for me. Tell me whom you frequently come in contact with in each of these departments and for what reason.

- How well informed do you feel you are about what is going on in other departments of the organisation? How do you keep informed?

- What are the goals of your department?

- Whom do you work with most to accomplish your objectives?

- What department have you found to be of most assistance in helping you to solve problems?

Job interest

- Why did you apply for this particular position?

- What do you think will be your main contribution in this position if you are selected?

- How do you see yourself carrying out the functions of this job?

Suitability of available position

- Now that I have explained the job duties, how do you think your experience suits you for it?

- What do you consider your best abilities and how will they help you in this job?

Political sensitivity

- How do you find out what your competitors are doing?

- How is your particular job affected by situations beyond your control outside your department? Give examples.

- What government agencies have an impact on your operations?

Social relationships

- Have you talked to your partner about this job?

- What types of people do you get along with best? What kinds of people annoy you?

Many questions asked by interviewers are likely to irritate you. To combat this irritation and the danger of a half-hearted or cynical response, remind yourself that:

- the interviewers think their questions are important;

- every response you make provides an opportunity to demonstrate a skill and/or achievement to the listener;

- you are in charge of the interview when you are speaking;

- other applicants may take more care in their responses;

- you are already aware that certain questions are likely to irritate you so you are not unprepared;

- interviews do not last very long. Accommodating a few irritating questions is a small price to pay for the chance of worthwhile employment.

The following general questions are the kind where your reply can decrease your chances, rather than improve them, unless you have rehearsed your responses in advance:

- What do you see yourself doing in five years time?
- Do you have any long-range ambitions?
- What is your father's occupation?
- What are your weaknesses?
- Why should we offer this position to you?
- Can you see any conflict of interest between your career and that of your partner?
- What are your leisure time interests?
- Why did you apply for this job?

'Have you any questions?' Of all the questions an interviewer is likely to ask, this one is handled most poorly by job seekers. There really can be no excuse for the applicant to answer 'No'. It is the best opportunity to benefit from the results of your pre-interview preparation, to sum up why you consider that you are suitable for the position and to include any factors in your favour that may not have been discussed during the interview up to this point. There are no 'right' questions to ask. A list cannot cover all the different situations job seekers encounter. You must develop at least four questions to ask before each interview appointment.

Consider selecting from the following list:

- Is the job you have in mind for me a new one, or does it have a history?

- Could you sketch the way in which work is organised here to show me where this particular job fits in?
- Who is in the job now, or how are the job tasks being handled at present?
- How will my performance been measured, and by what criteria?
- Can you describe the colleagues with whom I would be working?
- What specific objectives need to be met and what problems solved within the first six months?
- What would my future career prospects be once I have demonstrated success in this position?
- What assistance could I expect to develop my ability to handle the job as quickly as practicable?

Interviewer's Unspoken Questions

- How much enthusiasm does this applicant have about us?
- Will this person stay?
- Will we like each other?
- How motivated is this applicant?
- Could I rely on this person?

Evaluating your interview performance

So, you have experienced your first interview in your current job search campaign. It is highly likely that it will not be the only one. Whether the prospective employer invites you for a second discussion or whether you are unsuccessful, the right time to review your performance is now. Don't put it off. Act while the experience is fresh in your mind. The objective is to evaluate what you said, or asked, so that the next time you will be more confident, better prepared and more effective as an interviewee.

Work through the following brief self-evaluation. Don't be too hard on yourself. Be determined to do better next time. Remember it's not your trade or profession to be a skilled interviewee! To obtain the job you want, though, you will need to be better than the other applicants.

Preparation

- In what way could I have prepared better for the interview?
- Did I have enough knowledge of the employer?
- Did I arrive in plenty of time?

Opening

- Did I get off to a good start?
- How soon was the interviewer fully at ease?

Facts

- Did I get all the facts that I needed?
- What additional facts would have been helpful?

Attitudes

- How did I treat the questions I thought were silly or irrelevant?

Feelings

- Was I aware of my impact upon the interviewer?
- Did I know when to soft pedal or to push ahead with my questioning?
- Did I answer all questions thoughtfully?

Questioning

- Did my questioning follow on comfortably and logically from the interviewer's conversation?
- Did I neglect to question in areas where the interviewer provided clues?
- In what way could my questioning have been improved?

Listening

- Did I cut short the interviewer at any time?
- Did I talk too much?

Giving information

- What information did the interviewer misunderstand or appear to find difficult to understand or appreciate?
- Did I leave out any important information which would have improved my chances for selection?

- Is there a likelihood of undesirable consequences from any of the information that I have given?

- Did I give too bad a picture of my current job or employer?

Closing

- How could the interview have been better brought to a close?

- In what frame of mind do I think the interviewer closed the discussion?

- Did I give a confident indication to the interviewer of what I think about the vacancy?

General questions

- Did I make a friend of the interviewer?

- Did I show the interviewer real interest?

- Did I show annoyance at some of the questions?

- Do I know what is the next step in their selection procedure and when?

Few people feel interviews go badly for them. That this is so is at least partly due to the skills used by interviewers. Mild flattery, genuine interest, or quickly developed empathy with an interviewee create a friendly atmosphere. As a result, many job applicants have difficulty in understanding where interviews might have gone wrong for them. Follow this self-evaluation with a review of the conduct of the interviewer. This exercise will help you to decide whether you want to work for the employer.

I wouldn't emphasise the need for thoroughness in your post-interview appraisal so much if I did not know that it is often a key weakness in the total job search process. So do discipline yourself to undertake it after every interview. The following provides a further guide to the thoroughness of the self-appraisal you should carry out.

After Interview Checklist

Date_____
Employer or consultancy_____
Interviewer's name_____
Interviewer's title_____

		✓ Yes	No
1	Did you arrive on time?	❑	❑
2	What did you wear? _____		
	_____		
3	Were you friendly with all the people you came in contact with?	❑	❑
4	Did you introduce yourself to the interviewer?	❑	❑
5	Did you give the interviewer a copy of your résumé?	❑	❑
6	Did the interviewer go through your résumé?	❑	❑
7	Did the interviewer discuss anything from your personal background?	❑	❑
	If so, what points did this person talk about?		
	_____		
	Was it on your résumé?	❑	❑
8	Did the employer comment on any of your skills?	❑	❑
	If so, what did this person say? _____		
	_____		
	Were those skills included as skills on your résumé?	❑	❑

9 What was the employer's general impression of your résumé?_____

_____

10 Did the interviewer comment on your letters of reference? ❑ ❑
If so, what was said?_____

_____

11 Did you give the interviewer a firm handshake? ❑ ❑

12 Did the interviewer discuss any special problems you may have, such as handicaps, transportation problems, etc.? ❑ ❑
If yes, what problems were discussed?_____

_____

13 Did you look at the interviewer when you were speaking? ❑ ❑

14 Did you show good posture and no nervous mannerisms? ❑ ❑

15 Did you mention who referred you or if you know someone working at the company? ❑ ❑

16 Did you state your interest in the company? ❑ ❑

17 If you were feeling that you would not get the job you were being interviewed for, did you inquire about other position openings? ❑ ❑
Write down any job openings you heard about while at this company_____

_____

18 Did you state your interest in part-time or temporary employment if no full-time employment were possible? ❑ ❑

19 What subject was discussed the most?

_____

20 Was there anything the employer clearly disliked about your application? ❑ ❑
If so, what?_____

21	What did the interviewer seem particularly interested in?	❑	❑
22	Did the interviewer seem to like you?	❑	❑
23	Is this a situation where a follow-up letter should be sent quickly?	❑	❑
24	Interviewer's reactions to me: My strong points_____ _____ _____ My weak points_____ _____ _____ My prediction of next selection procedure step _____ _____ _____		
25	What actions can I take to increase my chances?_____ _____ _____		

An employment offer

Arriving at the stage where an employer offers employment can be very satisfying—but it should not signify the conclusion of the search. You need to evaluate the offer and decide quickly whether it is what you really want.

You are likely to sell yourself short if you rush to accept the first offer. There is danger that you could find yourself in a similar predicament to that created by the unsatisfying situation you have left or want to leave. Don't rush—move deliberately and carefully to your next job.

Employers may ring and offer a job. If in doubt about accepting, express interest and thanks for the offer and request time (say 24 hours) to consider your answer.

Arrange to ring back and advise your decision. Note the name and telephone number of the person to contact.

The employment offer should preferably be in typed form rather than verbal, but this depends on the custom and practice of the particular company concerned. Many offers are verbal; at law, a verbal offer and verbal acceptance are binding on both parties.

Whether in written or verbal form, you should ensure the following is known before giving your answer:

- employment contract period—whether a week's, a month's or more notice is required by either party to terminate the relationship ;
- day on which job commences, and to whom you report;
- job title;
- reporting relationships, extent of authority, initial tasks or projects to be accomplished;
- training offered to assist recruits:
- sick leave entitlement, leave loading eligibility, membership of a union—whether compulsory or not;
- payment of salaries or wages procedure.

In many situations, you will want to know more, such as the economic state of the company, what new products or services have been introduced recently and how successful they are, what opportunities for learning new skills exist within the company. Is external part-time education attendance financially subsidised? Is study leave and leave to attend daytime lectures provided?

Many people change employers for a higher salary only to find their subsequent salary increments occur at a slower rate than with their previous employer. It pays to find out the salary progress and review policy, as well as the initial salary. Only then can you judge whether joining the prospective employer is likely to increase your income at an improved rate.

When searching for jobs, older generations believed security of employment was critical. Today no employer offers security of employment. Many factors outside your control could terminate your employment. Your main quest should be to examine the record of profitability, the acceptance of the employer's products or services in the market, and the reputation of how they treat their employees.

If the company prospers, employees prosper with it; if it expands, job opportunities expand with it. If, on the other hand, an organisation starts to stagger, you may be lucky to survive on the payroll. Try to meet more than one member of the prospective employer's management before making your decision.

Saying no to an employment offer

An important part of job searching is learning when to say no to a job offer. That's not easy when the search has been long and your financial situation is difficult. Look out for these warning signs:

- There are no regular opportunities for learning how well you are fulfilling the requirements of the job.
- Performance standards are confused.
- Where your job tasks begin and end is not made clear.

- You do not know why the job was left vacant for a while.

- You have not learnt how much time will be needed to perform the job each day, each week, etc.

- You have not met your future boss.

- The job includes no facilities for learning new skills.

These are the usual danger signs of potential work dissatisfaction which may surface during interview discussions.

When you are unhappy in a job, you risk your job performance declining and your employment being terminated. To resign hurriedly these days can mean a long period before re-employment. It pays to check thoroughly before accepting a job offer.

Once the decision is made to accept or decline the position, you should advise the employer in writing or by telephone. When you accept a position, withdraw any other applications you have pending. It is an important courtesy and very helpful to recruiters. If another person introduced you to your new employer, do advise that person of the outcome.

☛ *Use the following analysis to evaluate whether you have carried out sufficient research BEFORE accepting a new job offer.*

Avoiding Problems in Your Next Job
by Analysing Your Current, or Most Recent Job

		Tick (✓) Yes/No/Unsure
1	Can you see when you have done a good job?	❑ ❑ ❑
2	Does the work give you a sense of achievement?	❑ ❑ ❑
3	Is it obvious to you if your job is done to standards acceptable to your boss?	❑ ❑ ❑
4	Can you do the job well without being dependent on co-workers?	❑ ❑ ❑
5	Can you avoid changing your tasks in your job at short notice?	❑ ❑ ❑
6	Is the job a stepping stone along your desired career path?	❑ ❑ ❑
7	Is it easy for others to see you do your best work in this job?	❑ ❑ ❑
8	Is your desired career move from this job likely within the next six months?	❑ ❑ ❑
9	Is your job requiring you to use the skills you prefer using?	❑ ❑ ❑
10	Is your job giving you responsibility for a complete piece of work?	❑ ❑ ❑
11	Is there clarity in the job tasks assigned to you?	❑ ❑ ❑
12	Do you *regularly* experience sufficient time and/or resources to carry out your job to your satisfaction?	❑ ❑ ❑
13	Are the surroundings where you work attractive to you?	❑ ❑ ❑

If you answered NO to:

Q.1, 3, 7, 11	the problem is Role Ambiguity (performance requirements unclear)
Q.5	the problem is Role Boundary (conflicting demands at work)
Q.4, 10, 12	the problem is Role Overload (insufficient resources)
Q.2, 9,	the problem is Role Insufficiency (insufficient use of training/skills)
Q.13	the problem is Physical Environment (discomforting work settings)
Q.6, 8	the problem is Reward Expectations (future value of work unclear)

5 Self-promotion

The key to job success

It has often been said that success is not a matter of what you know but who you know. Your own job search success depends on your willingness to self-promote. The more people you get to know, the more who get to know of you and your capabilities.

Most people feel that, after years of study or hard work as an employee, job search success should be a speedy result. The truth, however, can be disappointing. Qualifications and experience do not necessarily mean success in the job search.

Success in obtaining the right position, or even achieving promotion, is a matter of making your competence known to people who make decisions. There are no fairy godmothers who have a secret inventory of your capabilities for that job. You are your own best promoter.

Research into self-promotion has indicated strongly that the best jobs and the highest salaries go to those who can promote unashamedly whatever competence they have. This book gives you all the best ideas, targets, how to's, but these will all fail if you do not promote yourself in the job marketplace.

Self-promotion means the ability to prospect freely and create the opportunities to achieve your goals. Prospecting means being able to sell yourself by making a telephone call, being enthusiastic in the interview and, even more important, asking for the job.

Self-promotion checklist

Job seekers who do *not* experience reluctance to self-promote and/or to prospect have the following characteristics. They:

- have high motivation and realistic enthusiasm;
- don't hesitate when they see an employment or career advancement opportunity;
- act and speak with confidence and can say 'I don't know, but I can find out';
- speak highly of their capabilities;
- present themselves well;
- can present at a moment's notice;
- welcome the opportunity of speaking before groups, such as panel interviews or meetings;
- answer questions confidently and welcome such questions as opportunities;
- initiate opportunities where none appear to exist.

If you can say confidently that at least six of the above apply to you, you will get the best job for your capabilities. If you have four or less of these characteristics, you have sufficient prospecting reluctance to hinder your chances of success.

Prospecting reluctance

We have been taught from our childhood not to blow our own trumpet and that to do so is boastful. As we

grow older, we add in considerations such as manners or good taste or even ethics on top of these childhood learnings. Before we know it, we justify our low profile, our modesty, as something of a virtue.

These virtues become excuses that we justify and rationalise conveniently. We may even have the deep conviction that they are somehow 'right'. Being right in this context limits your probabilities for job search success. There is probably more 'wrong' in this situation than being right.

A prospective employer is not a superior person who can see and read everything between the lines. They are not likely to say 'I can see that you haven't mentioned that project that you completed so superbly in 1989, but I'll hire you anyway.'

Prospecting reluctance, or lack of motivation?

There is a significant difference between prospecting reluctance and laziness. The effect is the same, i.e. not getting out there to maximise employment opportunities. Correctly identifying the reasons will determine the steps you should take to succeed.

The reasons are quite subtle because of the hidden nature of excuse-making behaviour. Confusing the *lack* of motivation with *hindered* motivation has led people into making mistakes. Every day, we see employers fire people for lack of motivation and in so doing, lose the services of someone who, if managed with a proper understanding, would be a star employee.

Prospecting reluctance is not laziness, nor is it a lack of motivation on your part. Your motivation may have been blocked and diverted into channels that produce less than desirable results. The very fact that you are reading this book indicates that you have a concern for finding job and career satisfaction. The lazy and unmotivated person would not even have bothered to pick it up.

Motivation Self-Check

- Do you feel guilty for not finding that job?
- Are there times when you feel very anxious?
- Are you losing sleep?
- Have you ever picked up the phone to call about a job and decided that they wouldn't want you?
- Do you feel nausea, sweaty palms, or chest palpitations?
- Have you started a new job search approach, got bored and started something else?
- Do you feel that you can't get moving even though you want to?

If you have answered yes to most of these questions, you are motivated but are suffering from a blockage to expressing that motivation.

The forms of prospecting reluctance

Reluctance is an invisible shield that makes captive our motivation; and the more motivated we become, the more severe our reluctance will become. Many motivation books will teach you to power through your fears and overcome them. This may work if your life is in danger, but most employment opportunities involve a lot less than mortal danger so we need more help to inspire us to succeed.

This captivity takes many forms and occasionally is so subtle that it may escape detection. If you do not identify it, it will continue to be a load that you will carry for the rest of your life. Identification will at least allow you the

option of doing something about it, or not. Here are some of the forms:

- Detail-mindedness—Your résumé, the format, the presentation, the paper, the typing, the facts, are never right for employment prospecting. There are many details including preparation, personal dress, etc. which are not all perfect at any given time; and therefore a presentation cannot be made.

- Super positive—Everything for you is just great. You never have any career problems, your employment history is always fantastic and you can do any job any time—except prospect for a new one.

- The pessimist—Anything can go wrong for you, and it will. Bright shiny days, but you can't prospect because employers' decision makers are likely to be out. Rainy days surely make employers grumpy. Even if employers are in a good mood, someone else has got the job already. The selected candidate has been pre-arranged.

- The freezer—You find it very difficult to present to more than one person at a time. You fear potential situations where there may be two interviewers, and would freeze if a group presentation to a selection panel were required.

- The dignified—Applying for a job would entail selling yourself, and selling is only for those who have got something to hide. Sending a résumé is OK, but to actually persuade people and to point out the benefits is just too much.

- The nice person—Being non-assertive, you fear interrupting others and believe in being unob-

trusive. You wait and wait for the right moment before you act.

- The doormat—You are afraid to prospect people with a high status. You are not likely to feel comfortable replying to a published advertisement, or writing to or calling a managing director. If the chairperson of the Board of Directors were present at an interview, you would become unnerved.

- The non-closer—You find it difficult to ask for the job. The interview process is an exchange of information. Assuming that you want the job, as a non-closer you will defer the decision to the employer for a later date. There is a restraining fear of being answered no.

Everyone has at one time or another experienced some of the above fears in job prospecting. It can range from being a mild state with a little discomfort to a full-blown belief that effectively limits the chances of job success. It does not only apply to sending out résumés, making telephone calls, creating employment opportunities—it also applies to the interview process itself. If you fear job prospecting, then likewise you will show the same symptoms consciously or unconsciously during an interview.

Attitudes and Beliefs that Cause Reluctance

Changing behaviour

Those of you who have children will know how difficult it is to change a child's behaviour. Saying don't is almost a sure way of gaining the exact opposite action. It

Examples of Reluctant Thoughts

- There's not enough information for me to prospect.
- They have my résumé. If they want me, they'll call.
- I don't believe in having to sell myself.
- I couldn't call at lunch time.
- Prospecting is only for sales staff.
- I'm a professional, not a marketing representative.
- What if they asked me to speak to a group?
- They won't want me anyway.
- I can't just call a managing director.
- I feel sick at interviews.
- Having to ask for the job is like begging.
- I couldn't talk to my friends or family about jobs.
- They don't know what they are talking about.
- I don't want to have to talk to a secretary.
- They don't have the right conditions for my tastes.
- If they knew anything, they would contact to me.
- I just feel sick at the thought of having to call on the telephone.
- I couldn't apply to an advert in the *Financial Review*.
- I'll do it tomorrow, when I feel more confident.

seems the more frustrated you become, the harder you try and the less it works.

Behaviour is the automatic target for change because it is so apparent. However, behaviour is a symptom and any basic knowledge of treatment will require you to treat the cause.

Doing the right thing

The world would be a sad place if everyone deliberately set out to do the wrong thing. The way that we are built as human beings includes a strong drive to do the right thing. When things go wrong, we generally say that we did not do it according to the way we were thinking, or perhaps what we thought indeed was wrong. Nevertheless, our intent generally is to do right by what we think and we think what we believe to be right.

How attitudes affect behaviour

Traditional psychology holds that human temperament is largely permanent, and unless we go deeply into the foundations of our make-up, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to change the way we are. We are made up, from the base of our psyche, of instincts and drives, on which we superimpose upbringing, education and life experiences—all of which are impossible to reinvent.

In spite of this, a person's behaviour is often unpredictable. If all determinants of behaviour were known and predictable, there would be no advertising, counselling or communications industries. There would certainly be no political campaigns or elections because the outcomes would already have been determined.

While the foundations of behaviour seem to be fixed, there is one area that is changeable: attitudes. Attitudes are what politicians are targeting. Attitudes are what advertisers are changing when they compare their product with brand X.

Motivation within us urges us to act; the foundations of our mind largely determine how we are likely to act; and our attitudes will focus both our motivation and our foundations in a specific manner.

To win that job, your background has determined your occupational field and your experience has determined your competence. How you believe and how you feel about making that occupation and experience known will likewise determine how successful you will be in your job search.

Your attitudes about prospecting will determine what you do. To achieve success in winning that job, simply adopting new behaviours is unlikely to work because you are trying to change a symptom. Changing what you think, what you believe and what you feel will give you the behaviours which lead to success.

How then do you change your thinking? Isn't that even harder than changing a behaviour? Successful job prospecting, utilising all the valuable recommendations in this book, will require you to adopt whole new sets of behaviours.

How attitudes are formed

An attitude is an idea or thought about a subject that is identified as being true or false. We hold attitudes about many things, and they can often be expressed as opinions about certain subjects.

We also infer from people's behaviour that it is positive or negative in attitude, identifying perhaps what is in fact behind the action observed.

In the truest sense, attitudes are neither positive nor negative, they are merely ideas. We label them according to what results or behaviour we want. Therefore, when we hear someone say 'I don't like asking questions during an interview' we may infer that there is a level of discomfort that will retard their interview impression. It is only good or bad according to the end result desired. The only thing that we can observe with

some certainty is that the person has some hesitation or discomfort.

Everyone has attitudes because they are a necessary result of our psychological foundations and life experiences. The purpose of attitudes is to help us to handle all the events that confront us daily. If you had to start from scratch with every issue, it would take forever to think about anything. So it is a short-cut in our minds expressed as expectancies or principles of the thinking process.

Attitudes develop in our minds from very early childhood. As a new born baby, your attitudes may be a blank sheet awaiting information for you to make judgments. Your parents, relatives and schoolteachers are likely to teach you attitudes both consciously and unconsciously. In this instance of reluctance to prospecting for jobs, you are likely to have heard someone say in the past:

- Don't be so boastful.
- Don't talk to strangers.
- Stop bragging.
- Children should be seen and not heard.
- Keep quiet and listen.
- Speak when you are spoken to.
- You've got tickets on yourself.

Not only are you taught those ideas, but what happened when you disobeyed them? Luckily for me, the welts on my bottom didn't last forever—but the memory sure has. So, not only were you taught, you were also likely to have been punished in some way.

Useful Reminders

- Don't panic—the career transition process will ease anxiety.
- Express your anger—feelings of injustice, bitterness and recrimination must be let out, but to people who will understand.
- Cope with depression—admit openly when you're feeling depressed and seek strategies for coping from skilled people, such as counsellors or therapists.
- Take stock of your assets and limitations—be objective.
- Accept the reality of your situation and of your personal strengths and limitations.
- Discover the real satisfactions and goals in your life.
- Make your job search an opportunity for a learning experience, instead of a painful event.
- Have faith in investing time and thoroughness into your career analysis and goal planning—your self-regard and confidence will return and you'll be stronger than before.

Exactly what do you have to do in self-promotion?

You have to blow your own trumpet. You have to put your best foot forward. You have to talk to strangers when prospecting for the job you want.

The mind is amazing because we do not forget things too easily—especially when you were whacked for it. With that negative reinforcement, is it any wonder that you have become reluctant to go out and prospect easily for that job! Coupled with your desire to do the right thing, you cannot just go out and put yourself in front of people who seem to have power over your well-being.

No amount of persuasion can get some people to do it. You too may find it difficult because you would be against your attitudes, beliefs and feelings. But you are not alone. Everyone has been a child with similar experiences and therefore similar attitudes.

Common Physical Symptoms

- Just the thought of picking up the phone makes me sick.
- My heart jumps when I have to meet a manager.
- I experience shortness of breath.
- I perspire a lot.
- I feel panicky and freak out.
- I lose sleep the night before.
- My mind goes blank.
- I stutter.
- My throat goes dry.

Emotions, feelings and physical symptoms

When faced with the necessity of prospecting, you may experience uncomfortable physical symptoms ranging

from sweaty palms to nausea. These telltale physical reactions are much more apparent than your attitudes and quite often you don't even have to think for the reaction to take place.

There are many physical symptoms and feelings that people experience and you may have ones that are not stated above. Write your own symptoms on a sheet of paper, because when you experience those symptoms again, it will let you know that something is wrong.

You probably have made thousands of phone calls without breaking into a cold sweat. You have probably addressed many social groups without losing words. Why do these physical symptoms and feelings appear when we prospect for a job? The answer lies in the speed of the mind.

When perception of an event takes place, the thought processes are so quick that you are not normally able to detect what has happened. Due to that speed, you immediately associate your body reactions with the event or person under consideration. Therefore, it seems as if that event or person causes you to react. How can a telephone make anyone do anything? A telephone is just a telephone.

While we are rational beings, our minds can sometimes play tricks on us and the associations made in fearful circumstances become quite irrational.

The true irrationality is not in our bodies, but in our attitudes to certain events. The body, in the wink of an eye, has taken instructions from our pre-set attitudes and reacted with physical symptoms of fear.

Self-image and your attitudes

What you think and what you believe about yourself are very important. Your self-esteem and your attitudes will have a great bearing upon your job search success. As a matter of fact, your whole life success or failure is connected to such attitudes.

Helpful Activities

The following are activities that can increase your ability to promote yourself positively:

- When customers/clients tell you they are particularly pleased with your work, thank them and ask them if they'd be willing to mention their satisfaction to your manager.
- Initiate a performance feedback session with your boss or a customer.
- Role play an interview with a friend who'll give you a hard time and constructive feedback.
- Use social gatherings to practise describing your work in full and positive terms.
- Carefully observe people who project a positive image and note how they do it.
- Sign up for an Interpersonal Communications or Assertiveness Training course.

Self-image is formed by our socialisation process. A child learns from the comments and reaction of others around. These positive and negative reinforcements begin at a very early age. Babies are encouraged by positive reinforcement to goo and gah, to pick up rattles and make noises, to move and to walk. Within the space of 18 months, the picture begins to change: 'Don't yell.' 'Put it down.' 'Sit and behave.' By the time that the teenage years arrive, the child receives the full negative reinforcements of daily life. Researchers indicate that for every positive reinforcement, you receive eight negatives. Is it any wonder that we sometimes have poor self-images?

Before blaming everything and everyone around you, there is an additional factor to be considered. Some very positive people have had extremely poor and negative upbringings. There are others who have had every advantage and turn out poorly. There is a mechanism of decision within you that decides whether to accept or reject reinforcements, be they positive or negative. That mechanism is your attitude.

It is important to note that being positive is not to be legendary in optimism, to whistle in the dark, to follow some Indian or American guru. Nor does it have anything to do with reciting affirmations or other incantations. To be positive is to be open, expansive, receptive and rational.

Overcoming motivational blocks

Motivation is within everyone. If you were not highly motivated, you would not have continued reading this far. Therefore, the reason for not attaining your job search goal lies not in the lack of motivation, but in the blockages that are hindering your motivation.

We dream and fantasise about the job we would like and may regard such dreams as being totally unreal. Yet in this unreality is the tremendous motivational creativity. Do not dismiss this fantasy! It is your motivation at work and if you do not hinder it by an instant 'It won't work', there may come other thoughts that will improve and add to such ideas. As a matter of fact, write them down so that you can then apply some reality testing and possibility thinking. Let your motivation have its head and let it run as you write.

Identifying your objectives

Having developed some of your ideas and motivation, it is important for you to identify clearly exactly what you are seeking to achieve.

Job hunting, like any other form of endeavour, will produce what you are aiming to achieve. So, in this instance, it is very important that you set your sights on the target that you really want and not on something vaguely in that area.

Examples of Clear Objectives

Electronics Engineering—A design position in switching; advanced technology company; small team with good leader; opportunity for overseas postings.

Personal Assistant—A challenging position with lots of responsibility working for one boss; handle all business; become really involved with all aspects of company; small to medium size organisation.

Sales Professional—High paying sales position; earn at least $80 000 pa; city metropolitan area but will travel if required; good products with high integrity company.

Each of the above examples are specific as to the importance of, and the minimum, satisfaction standards acceptable without stretching the job seeker's requirements into the impossible. The more requirements, the harder it is to fulfil. It is, nevertheless, important to identify your target clearly otherwise you will not know when you have found the right employment opportunity.

Sorting out priorities

What are the key elements to the position that you are seeking? Identify exactly how many elements you have and rank them in order of your importance. In the above example of the sales professional, what if the

person were to be offered $80 000 but had to travel interstate? Or the product was run-of-the-mill? Or even a great product but with a company with a so-so reputation? The ranking could be something like this:

1 Money
2 Product
3 Company

If money is of overriding importance, then your efforts should be targeted towards employment opportunities that will deliver this particular possibility. You may, in fact, have to sacrifice product or company reputation. If they are all equal, then the effort may involve adjusting some or all of the requirements when an employment opportunity arises.

The second aspect of priorities is how serious you are about seeking such an opportunity for yourself. In job seeking, the earnestness with which you tackle the task will be reflected by your priorities. In his book, *Stop Postponing the Rest of Your Life*, Paul Stevens outlines the necessity for you to dedicate yourself to the pursuit of the satisfaction that underpins your life. In other words, there is a need for you to shape up your priorities to achieve what you are seeking. If your priority is job seeking, it means that you cannot go out and mow the lawn or sew that dress, no matter how urgent it may seem to be.

Logistics and support

When you are hired for a job, your performance will certainly require dedication and professionalism. Seeking your job requires no less dedication to the task. Therefore, you should shape your support around you to give optimum chance of success. In other words, your family, routines, work habits, timetables, etc. should be geared towards achieving your goals.

If unemployed, or even employed in an undesirable position, the tendency is to treat the project in a lax manner. But, remember that you are working on the most important project of all—your life.

If it requires that you work on job application mailings, or telephone calls or attending interviews, prepare yourself accordingly. Get dressed up, create files, write your tasks down in your diary, plan your prospecting routine, fulfil the tasks you have set down and ensure that you have people around you who are supportive.

The one-day management system

In reviewing the task ahead in prospecting and being interviewed, it may appear to be quite daunting. It seems such an enormous task to send out so many letters, make so many phone calls, just to succeed in getting a job. Be assured that like many of the worthwhile things in life, a certain amount of effort is required—but not an insurmountable amount.

The smallest unit of management of your life is simply one day. You cannot manage yesterday because it is past, nor can you manage tomorrow, because it is not yet here. However, you can manage one day. Today!

Plan your daily activity in detail after you have set up your overall objectives and priorities. Plan on sending out ten letters each day, and making ten follow-up phone calls and perhaps attending one interview every second day. In doing so, you have set yourself manageable targets that can be fulfilled. If you do not succeed in reaching the day's goals, put today behind you. Tomorrow seek to fulfil that next day's goals.

You will find that you will gain a sense of satisfaction and achievement from having completed what you have set out to do. At the same time, you will know that you have been giving yourself the best chance of success. When you have completed the day's tasks, congratulate yourself because you have earned it.

At the end of the week, take out your daily worksheets and review your results. Have I gained what I have set out to do? Have I had the numbers of interviews to put me in the race for the job I want? Do I need to modify the job search plan for next week? Perhaps I need to mail 20 résumés per day? Perhaps I need to follow up again on the ones from last week? The end-of-week review will help you to set up new daily activities for the following week. Then congratulate and reward yourself on a job well done.

Five Self-Promotion Action Steps

1 Make motivation work for you—not restrict you.

2 Identify your job content and career development objectives exactly.

3 Clarify and record your re-employment priorities. Classify them as urgent, essential or desirable.

4 Ensure maximum support from people around you.

5 Manage one day at a time.

Rational, open and expansive attitudes

Many of our self-talk attitudes are negative in tone. Being negative, they are generally irrational, restrictive and tend towards closure. To be positive is not to whistle in the dark as the train is about to run you down. It is to be open, rational and expansive because you do not know the outcome of a neutral event.

In this manner, you will adopt attitudes that will help you to have a relaxed manner in your job prospecting. With a positive attitude, you will look forward to and anticipate opportunities to present yourself at your best.

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When you look forward to an event, what are you thinking? It generally is something pleasurable or is something of an opportunity for you. The job of your choice is exactly that event or gain!

Examples of Positive Self-Talk for Job Prospecting

I enjoy job prospecting. I know the more people I talk to, the more people will know what I can do for them.

Job prospecting is fun. It gives me the chance to meet many interesting people and to find out about various worklife situations.

I interview with ease and confidence. I can tell employers about myself in a relaxed manner and speak with enthusiasm.

I can make people feel at ease so I can answer their questions with comfort and truth. They can see how valuable my contribution could be.

Job prospecting is the foundation of my career success. It exposes me to the best employers and worthwhile jobs.

I can't foretell the future, but the next chance may be the best I have ever seen.

It is important for you to develop your own statements that apply to your circumstances. You may choose some, all or none of the above examples. Notice that the statements are not affirmations unrelated to reality. They are your reality simply because they are open, rational and expansive.

Does no equal rejection?

The most disappointing word in the English language has to be the word no. It has the worst connotations that begin with our request to parents to do something we might enjoy, through to our teenage years when we experience our first disappointment in love. These noes in our early development somehow do not ease the burden nor the trauma in adult life when we receive rejection.

Rejection is a feeling of not being wanted. It has meanings of unworthiness, not good enough, others are better, I am wrong for the job.

What No May Mean

The word no from an employer could mean:

- I've had a bad day.
- I've got pressure to hire someone else.
- I don't have enough information.
- I can't pay that much.
- I need more skills in another area.
- I don't want to make a decision.

and another 100 possibilities!

How many times have you said no to people? If we go back in our memories and ask 'Why did our parents say no to us?', we are more likely to understand now that it was generally for our protection. When you say no to a child, what is the intent? If the child is misbehaving, it could also be accompanied by a smack on the bottom.

Your intent is a message of love and concern because the child may be hurt. Guess how the child may perceive it.

In growing into adult life, we carry the same feelings of hurt and associate the word no with rejection. Our attitudes make automatic assumptions about ourselves that may not be true and engage in self-talk that is restrictive and irrational.

These attitudes, like your other self-talk, can be challenged as in the method outlined previously. Once you are able to recognise that no may have other reasons and meanings, you can no longer assume that you are being rejected.

Does no equal rejection? NO!

No is a reflection of the person who has said it. It has nothing to do with you, your competence, your worthiness and your desirability as an employee. To become positive, you should come up with your own open, expansive and rational statements that truly reflect on who you are.

Acknowledging yourself and others

What does it feel like to be thanked for a job well done? If you are like 99.9% of people, you will feel great and will continue doing more of the same.

Acknowledgement is a very important process to exercise for others and for yourself. Every employer, *even having said no,* should be acknowledged and thanked for their time and courtesy. In doing so, you will leave behind a strong sense of goodwill. Occasionally, it has left such a good impression that the employer mentioned the candidate to another colleague, who in turn made a job offer.

The most important person to be thanked and acknowledged is you. Treat yourself like you would treat a prospective employer. You may have worked hard, made a lot of calls, sent a lot of résumés out and at the end of the week there is still no job. Have you done all that is possible? Have you achieved in a systematic fash-

ion the job search activities begun at the week's beginning? If so, thank yourself.

Treat yourself and your family or friends to a drink or a nice meal—or whatever is meaningful to you—for the good work you have done. When acknowledged, you will become refreshed and motivated for the next challenge.

Getting it together

Job prospecting, like many opportunities in life, is dramatically enhanced when you are able to self-promote the qualities that you have. In making them known as widely as possible, people will get to know what you are and what you can do. The person who can do that best is you. You are the only person who can get out and promote yourself in a realistic, open and expansive manner so that you can be heard.

Your upbringing and life experiences create negative attitudes within that up until now have produced behaviour to your detriment. You can now challenge those negatives and re-cast them into workable and new ways of thinking that will produce success. Use all the valuable recommendations in this book, together with your new thinking, and experience the competence you have in mastering and achieving career satisfaction.

This chapter has been contributed by Ted Leong, an Industrial Psychologist in Sydney who has spent many years in recruitment and selection. His consulting activities range from the armed forces through to major Australian corporations. He is a graduate of the University of New South Wales and Yale University, and in recent years has developed new approaches to solving problems in management development. His experience in assisting sales professionals to gain outstanding results has been incorporated into his insights into the hiring process.

His approach to solving attitude limitations will assist the job searcher to seek opportunities they had previously not thought to be possible.

Some Points Frequently Neglected by Job Seekers

- Have you made up a list of prospective employers and their addresses?
- Have you found out information about these employers and the industry in which they operate?
- Have you started a job search record in which information about prospective employers and copies of correspondence can be kept for quick reference?
- Have you given a copy of your résumé to those who have agreed to provide references or act as referees?
- Have you completed your job application letter and discussed it with at least three people before mailing?
- Have you recorded a list of contacts who are already in employment and might help you? Have you contacted them?
- Have you selected and prepared the clothes you will wear to interviews?
- Do you have a positive attitude? (Are you ready for a period of thorough and challenging job searching during which you expect to meet interesting people?

6 Job search tips and unusual strategies

If there is one factor I would isolate as the main cause of failure in job searching, it is lack of preparation and innovation in the manner in which so many job seekers attempt to gain employment. What follows are recommendations on job seeking ranging from the standard to the unusual. Often the adoption of a combination of several of these methods turns an unsuccessful job search into a winning event.

Unsolicited applications

Many vacancies are never publicised but instead are filled by applicants who, on their own initiative, approach employers or recruitment agencies. A solicited application (i.e. seeking applicants through recruitment advertising) will invariably place you in competition with many others. Such advertisements are expensive for the employer. Consequently, many of them maintain an applicant bank, a file of unsolicited applicants. When an employee is transferred or promoted, resigns or retires, the cost-attentive recruiter will search their applicant bank—and contact a number of applicants.

Management consultants and employment agencies frequently use this technique. You should post your résumé to a carefully selected number of them. Carefully selected, as some are less than discreet with applicant information and you could jeopardise your current employment. Do your research thoroughly. Don't ignore this useful avenue for job searching.

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Employers like to receive applications, even though they have not advertised. It saves advertising costs when a vacancy occurs, fills jobs more quickly and supplies applicants who are demonstrating initiative for consideration by managers.

Part as friends

Job searching may not start until you have resigned from your current employer, or may begin while you are still employed. Whatever the situation, part on friendly terms. A personal tone of thanks in your resignation letter will have a lasting impression and may help any reference inquiries your new employer may make.

Don't trust your memory

Success in capturing the right job comes as a result of thoroughness. Each aspect of the search needs three ingredients: organisation, imagination and persistence.

An active job searcher will rapidly acquire a lot of important data: names, position titles, addresses, telephone numbers, interview appointments, telephone conversations, salary and benefit details, employer statistics, financial data, product or service information. It could hamper your chances for employment if you confuse information about one employer with that of another. The best protection is to record data in summary form. Use an index card or page of a notebook for each application you make. Record the key points discussed at each interview, the date it occurred, the people you met. Not only will this relieve the burden on your memory, but it will help when sending thankyou notes when your job search is over.

Because so many job seekers fail to organise their search activities effectively, frequently becoming confused when relying on their memory and losing employment offer opportunities through poor record keeping, The Centre for Worklife Counselling has

designed a comprehensive workbook. *Your Job Search Organiser* incorporates over sixty worksheets and record-keeping aids covering all the data-recording aspects a job seeker may encounter. For further details write to the Centre at PO Box 407, Spit Junction 2088, Australia.

You need two telephone numbers

When you are job hunting, make sure you can be contacted quickly. If a prospective employer cannot communicate their interest in you soon after reading your résumé, other applicants may receive the interview invitation. When there are several applicants, the one who can be contacted immediately will often get the interview.

Every job application letter and résumé should list two telephone numbers at the top of the page. The first should be where you are likely to be most of the time—the other where a message may be left for you. If it is difficult for you to arrange for a reliable message-taker, install some form of telephone answering facility—lease an answering machine or buy a second-hand model or contract with a telephone answering service.

Unemployment on the increase!

Unemployment percentages published in the media are rarely helpful to your appraisal of your re-employment situation. In fact, they may cause you to accept remaining in an unsatisfactory worklife environment or propel you to accept an offer which you know does not suit the career development step you have reasoned is appropriate for you. National or State-wide statistics on unemployment do not relate to specific occupations. Research could uncover, in fact, that the market for your skills in terms of demand and supply actually favours you.

Don't allow assumptions to jeopardise your career transition goal. Investigate the reality. Contact Chambers of Commerce, related professional associations and industry federations. Ask the staff for a briefing on the current situation for your occupational target. Then manage your job search, confident that your aims are realistic or that some compromise is reluctantly necessary when the facts are found out and appraised.

Apply twice!

When you are rejected for a particular position, but like the nature of employment environment where you were interviewed, apply again. Don't wait for a vacancy to be advertised. Write to the interviewer and request them to circulate your employment record to appropriate managers. Such initiative is often rewarded by a second chance and could lead to a job offer.

> ☛ *Answer an advert within a week if you fit the job perfectly. If you don't fit perfectly, wait two weeks. By that time, the flood of résumés will have subsided. Yours may be read more carefully. If the employer hasn't been pleased with the response, you may be in luck.*

Winning in the first four minutes

Many job seekers present poorly in the early stages of an interview. Yet this can be the most important part. An astute job seeker, aware of this limitation, enrols in conversation training courses, such as those conducted by Learning Performance (Aust.) Pty Ltd.

During such training, a job seeker is likely to learn about:

- relaxing the other person by relaxing yourself;
- winning before the race starts—in the first four minutes;
- talking to impress, but listening to be liked;
- asking questions that put the other person at ease;
- remembering names—'You're important to me!';
- compliments—the soft and the hard—the give and the take;
- researching and remembering to really get noticed;
- the exchange of clues—take it or leave it?
- body language—the hidden agenda;
- process vs content—is the 'what' really important?
- attitudes and preconceptions in discussions;
- presenting yourself to your best advantage;
- working a room—networking by rapport building;
- quitting—leaving the rapport intact;
- putting it all together—the whole approach.

Each segment is discussed, demonstrated, practised and reinforced. The participant leaves the training course with a series of useful and usable skills.

Go where future boss does

In cities and in large towns, there are a host of associations and institutes which hold meetings each month, usually on a weekday evening. Consider what association or institute the manager of the type of work area in which you wish to be employed is likely to attend. Ring the secretary and request that you may participate at the next meeting as a non-member guest. Your attendance would provide you with an opportunity for networking and handing over a copy of your résumé to likely prospects.

Browse through the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*

This is a substantial encyclopaedia of descriptions of most occupations within the country covering both the public and private sector. It has many potential benefits for the job seeker, determined to identify their widest range of employment options. From the details of job tasks, education prerequisites, types of employers which it contains, a reader should be able to identify many job titles which match their credentials and experience.

For the person intent on change in career path direction, the *Dictionary* is particularly useful for determining those skills which are transferable from one occupation to another without formal retraining.

You may not want to be a collar turner, cryptanalyst or feather boner, but many viable alternatives will be your reward for time spent reading it. Published by the Federal Department of Employment and Training, copies can usually be found in public libraries, CES or in the possession of career counsellors.

Publish to be noticed

Many employees become aware of ideas, practices or needs that would be of interest to others. If you developed a plan that was successful for a past employer, and are not bound by secrecy agreements, write about it and seek an opportunity for publication in the print media.

Your past employer may not have adopted it, but if you believe your plan remains a good idea, then add it to your job application documents to take to interviews. Those who read about your problem-solving idea may be impressed and want to talk to you. This applies whether you are currently employed or not.

Getting interviews comes from being known. Approach the editor of your industry or professional journal, or members' newsletter. Most industries have their own trade or employer association with staff keen to publish information of potential benefit to their readers.

If you are hesitant about your ability to write up your problem-solving idea, discuss it with the editor. You are most likely to be offered help. The published story will still identify you as the originator and will broadcast your name to a wide audience. Many with the authority to hire you are likely to be among the readers.

Remember, what you have done successfully in past employment is your strongest case for being re-employed. To apply your efforts to broadcasting your good ideas is often better than waiting for the right recruitment advertisement to appear.

Rehearse, rehearse and rehearse again

Rehearsals improve your chance of obtaining a job. To practise your self-marketing skills, apply for a job you do not really want. Even better, apply for several. Without the strain of being evaluated for a position you want, you can practise your interview presentation more comfortably.

Go through the routine of talking to the people who do the hiring. Practise communicating your best features in relation to the job requirements. Note carefully which skills mentioned arouse the interest of the interviewer. In the process you will learn what causes interviewers to hire one applicant and reject others. After a few rehearsals in non-threatening situations, your interview performance will be more effective when it really matters to you.

If you are offered a job during your rehearsal applications, you can respond in one of two ways. You can say politely that you will think it over. Then write or ring the next day and give your answer. Alternatively, your rehearsal application may have uncovered an employment opportunity which does in fact meet your career objectives. By checking against the criteria you established at the beginning of your job search, make sure that it does, then accept it!

Write your own job advertisement

If you are a member of a professional association or a social or sporting club which issues a newsletter or journal, a useful job-seeking strategy may be available. Contact the secretary or editor with a ten-line description of yourself and the type of work you are seeking. Most editors are short of items to include in each issue and a request from you may be welcome, as it helps fill the pages. You could also suggest that a Positions Wanted column be included in following issues.

It may take several attempts to describe your needs in ten lines, but advertising in this way is inexpensive—often free—and reaches a large readership. Not every person throws the newsletter away after reading it. Newsletters are frequently left in waiting rooms, libraries or given to others. If this strategy brings you success, remember to thank the person who agreed to include your advertisement in their publication.

Former employers are prospects

Many unemployed job seekers neglect previous employers as a possible source of employment. It is not important whether you were employed there recently or many years ago; people are likely to be there who remember you and your work standards, and details of your previous employment and performance rating would be retained on files. As an applicant who is familiar with the employer's business and work procedures you could be an attractive proposition for hiring, as you would cost less to train than a stranger.

If there are no full-time vacancies, you may be able to obtain some temporary or part-time work. There should be no embarrassment when reapplying to former employers. You need a job. They need people who know how to help solve their problems. If your inquiry is unsuccessful, don't stop at this point—ask the employer's staff who remember you for the names of people they know to whom you could apply. Give them a copy of your résumé as a prompter to let you know about employment opportunities they may learn about later.

What to do about no response

If you have written to an employer and received no reply, telephone whoever you wrote to. Start the conversation by referring to the letter you mailed and check whether the person has received it. If you do not get an invitation to an interview, keep on asking questions. What did the person think about the contents of your letter? Has the person any recommendations on other places you could apply to?

Not everyone will be willing to take time to give advice, but your letter and follow-up call may open the way to a useful conversation that would not be possible if you had not written at all. A different approach to get action from an employer is to write a second letter and

mention the date your first letter was posted. Say that, as mail delays may have caused the original to have been lost, a copy of your résumé is enclosed. Finish by saying how anxious you are to learn of any progress with your inquiry. State that this employer was carefully selected for your first letter as being one very appealing to you when you spent time researching possible employers.

Most job seekers underestimate the cumbersome, time-consuming nature of job application processing within organisations. What may be regarded as a 'dead' application may be very much 'alive'.

> ☛ *Think about the clothes you wear to interviews. Ask yourself 'What do they broadcast about me?' If you're not sure, seek advice.*

Appraising recruitment literature

Many employers go to considerable expense to produce glossy recruitment brochures. Some make extravagant claims—such as 'We have excellent opportunities for advancement'—yet omit to describe the criteria for promotion. Many summarise the careers of individual whiz-kid employees who have been promoted rapidly. Others make sure that information about their products and services dominates the text at the expense of job details and career paths. A wise job searcher will be suspicious of too much rhetoric and too little essential data.

A recruitment brochure can be a good basis for developing questions for interviews, and that's how an effective job searcher should treat it. A recruitment brochure should at least describe the nature of work offered, give sufficient information on the organisation's structure. describe possible career paths, make clear who should

apply and what experience and qualifications are needed, and describe the training provided.

Often there are two brochures: one containing the data already mentioned, another detailing the terms and benefits of employment. The latter is very important. It represents the indirect remuneration common to most positions. As it is part of your remuneration as a prospective employee, read it carefully and evaluate its contents compared with other prospective employers' benefits. Look for what isn't said in both types of brochures and develop a series of questions to obtain more information.

Advertisement clippings

Don't throw away the advertisement for a job in which you are interested. Keep a scrapbook of adverts to which you have mailed your job application. It's a handy reference for the names of people and addresses when you are contacted. But, most importantly, each advert is loaded with clues as to what the employer is seeking. It will be beneficial to read and re-read the advertisement immediately prior to an interview.

In telephone conversations you can impress the employer with your awareness of the details in the advertisement. Remember, the employer probably produced six drafts, spent no less than two hours preparing the copy and more time arranging for its design and publication. An advertisement is a job or person specification in miniature. If you can succeed in putting yourself in the writer's place for a few minutes, you will be able to foresee many of the questions likely to be put to you at an interview.

Sources of vacancy and employer information

If you are an undergraduate or graduate, don't neglect to visit the Student Employment Unit or contact the employment counsellors within each faculty. Though

you may have graduated some time ago, you have every entitlement to return to the campus and ask for information from these sources.

Many professional associations publish journals that contain advertisements for vacancies and several encourage members to publish their availability without revealing names—usually at no charge. The Stock Exchange library in your state capital city is a very useful source of information on potential employers. Your local library is highly likely to have in its reference section such publications as *Jobson's Year Book, The Business Who's Who of Australia, Kompass Business Directories, Riddell's Business Who's Who* and *Graduate Outlook.*

The business pages of your daily paper can provide information about companies and industry trends that will help you to make unsolicited job applications with a well informed approach.

Management consultants and employment agencies

A vast number of personnel search assignments are handled by management consultants and employment agencies. Their function is to establish contact between employer and job searcher. The most important fact to remember when applying through them is that they act for their clients, their fees come solely from their clients, their interest is in satisfying their clients' needs—not yours. They are a facility to your job search *after* you have decided what it is you want in a new job. They cannot act without bias towards their clients' requirements as it's from these that they derive their business income. So make your career direction decisions *before* you talk with them.

The problem most job seekers encounter is identifying which of the many recruitment consultants and employment agencies are likely to be the most useful for

their particular objectives. In NSW over 700 are registered under the Employment Agencies Act.

Using Research Skills in Your Job Search

- Finding relevant job guides, occupational descriptions, prospective employers' directories.
- Identifying the variety of job titles often used to describe similar jobs.
- Analysing educational, experience and physical requirements in different occupations.
- Assessing labour market trends (growing or contracting?) for your job search goal.
- Evaluating industry trends (growing or contracting?) for prospective employers.

Institute of Personnel Management

Most members of the Institute of Personnel Management have processed hundreds of job applications and interviewed many people. They are a very useful resource for a number of reasons:

- They are able, through their training, to provide information which could help you with your employment objective.
- They are often willing to give tips on job interview presentation.
- They can provide you with employment application forms that you can fill in and gain a clear idea of what is required on such forms, while practising your answers to awkward questions.

A member may assist you to rehearse by conducting a mock interview. Rehearsing with an individual outside one's friends is likely to be more useful to you.

Find a counsellor

It can help considerably to discuss in confidence your job search strategy and career objectives with another person. A good counsellor can refine your approach, save you time, and enable the facts of your past and present to be seen more objectively than you can analyse alone. Don't rely on the counsel of just one well-meaning adviser—get a broader consensus—but remember that ultimately you will have to decide on your actions alone.

There are career counselling and job search consultants who charge for using their knowledge and experience to help you. If you seek such a service consider the following. It won't do you any good to pay money for advice and then decide later that, because you don't like what you heard, you will take no notice. If you have satisfied yourself the consultant is qualified to advise, pay attention. None can carry out and complete the job search for you. The legitimate consultant acts as a coach, a confidant and a guide to your future action.

Handling head-hunters

You might receive a telephone call from a head-hunter—a management search consultancy. To receive an unsolicited call from a search consultancy is no longer unusual, as more employers are using consultants for recruitment instead of expanding their own personnel departments. Whether you are flattered or not by the call, there are certain steps you should take on receiving an approach from a firm you don't know.

You are likely to think: Why did they call me? Where did they get my name? Can I trust them?

The smart person listens first and then researches before deciding whether to pursue the invitation to discuss an alternative job opportunity offered in this way.

You can make two mistakes. The first is to be too cautious. If you are contented in your present job you may be concerned that your employer may learn you are considering another position. You could tell the contact that you are not interested without really knowing what opportunity you have turned down. After all, you were chosen to be contacted because you have some qualifications for this job. It's reasonable, at least, to obtain more information.

But be careful not to go to the other extreme. Flattered by the approach, some hastily send off a résumé to the search firm without checking them out. The following should be your guide:

- Find out the name of the search firm and of the person who has contacted you. Check the telephone directory to verify the number and call back to make sure you are talking to the firm represented.

- Ask the person to contact you at home so that you will be able to speak and question with less inhibition than in your office.

- Make sure a job actually exists and that the search firm is not simply trying to accumulate résumés for their files. Ask to see a job description.

- Be specific about how your résumé is handled. If there is any doubt, get an agreement in writing that the firm will not send out your résumé without your prior approval.

- Ask the search firm for references. A reputable firm will be glad to tell you of companies they've

worked with and people they've placed. Check these to see if the firm has a good reputation.

- If you are interested only in the particular job offered and do not want to be contacted in the future, make this clear to the recruiter.

- If you decide to follow up on the offer, try to arrange a meeting with a senior member of the search firm as soon as possible, so that you can get a better idea who you are dealing with.

In considering a job change, remember that the older notions of stability and loyalty have loosened in today's employment scene. Job changes are recognised as part of career advancement. They are often looked on as signs of broad experience and ambition.

Changing from military to civilian employment

Most men and women leaving the defence forces, especially after many years of service, have had little or no practical experience in how to seek and win jobs in the civilian employment market. Employment specialisation and job placement have largely been managed by the personnel branches of the armed services, and individuals have not needed to market their own skills and abilities to prospective employers. The difficulties experienced by many defence force personnel can be summarised as follows:

- identifying and evaluating the civilian career options available;

- determining the optimum timing and direction of career change;

- preparing a résumé free of military terminology and jargon;

- handling job interviews from the other side of the desk;

- negotiating remuneration;

- evaluating investment options for lump sum retirement monies;

- arranging personal and financial affairs to take best advantage of income tax regulations, private companies and discretionary trusts, capital gains opportunities, etc.

Résumé writing and performance at selection interviews continue to be the most difficult problems experienced by defence force personnel during their transition to civilian employment. I find that many military personnel write résumés using service expressions and abbreviations unfamiliar to potential employers. They frequently fail to express accurately the supervisory, managerial or financial responsibilities of their service appointments.

Not often in a military career has a service person played the role of job applicant, and may more frequently have been the interviewer than the person being interviewed. The perspective can be disturbingly different from the other side of the desk. However, the impression created during the interview is perhaps the most critical factor in the job search process. The key to success in job interviews is not simply a matter of personality and confidence. Just as the interviewer uses well-proven skills and techniques, so should the service person know how to accentuate strengths, rather than weaknesses or irrelevancies.

Leaving the defence force is not simply a matter of changing employers. The decision to return to civilian life will have enduring implications for financial security, family situation, income level, lifestyle, future career development and long-term economic expecta-

tions. Your decisions on a new career path should be based on:

- full knowledge of the options available to you;
- careful selection of the best and most achievable option;
- expert advice on the financial and professional implications of your career change decisions;
- identifying where the most appropriate appointments are to be found;
- learning corporate procedures for recruitment and selection.

Dealing with discrimination

It's wise to remove all reference to your religion, political affiliations and place of birth from written job applications. You are communicating with a stranger whose prejudices you don't know. Yet employers do need to learn personal information in order to make a decision about your suitability for their employment environment. My view is that a job seeker should leave the communicating of personal information, such as family size, marital status and social activities, to the interview stage. If questions are asked that you feel apprehensive about answering, or you consider the inquiry irrelevant or inappropriate, then a reason for the questions can be politely requested.

Laws and regulations do exist to restrict the nature of data requested by recruiting staff. Trained counsellors are available at no charge to job searchers to advise about matters which may be causing a lack of success. Using these resources could help you to decide how to handle questions you believe jeopardise your selection

chances. Discuss your situation in confidence with your local anti-discrimination or equal opportunity board staff. The address and telephone number for both these advisory services can be located in the telephone directory.

The investment of your time in these discussions could make you a more confident applicant and improve your chances of job search success.

Selection tests

Aptitude measurement, psychological assessment, preference analysis, temperament schedules are all terms which usually mean an uninvited and intimidating experience to most job seekers. For both the young and mature-aged the result is often fear and an inability to complete the tests to the true standard of their individual capabilities. If you have this phobia it could affect either your chances of obtaining further interviews, or being the chosen one among many job applicants.

Many employers and employment agencies use tests to help choose staff. You may think such testing is an unreliable indicator of your real self. Many a good applicant withdraws their application when advised that a series of tests has to be completed. Remember, however, that employers who use tests as part of their selection procedures do so because they consider them important. Nothing will be achieved if you want to work for an employer, yet decline to undertake their tests.

If tests are of such importance, you may well ask why their reputation is so forbidding. The main reason is our fear of any form of examination. Another is their use by people untrained in their administration and the interpretation of the results. The lack of proper facilities for testing, little or no explanation about their purpose, and frequently no feedback on the results, are regrettably common among many test administrators.

Unfortunately, too many recruitment consultants insist on testing in order to generate increased revenue,

rather than as a valid component of their appraisal of applicants for their clients' needs. Furthermore, applicants rarely receive advance notice that they are required to complete tests. It can be a shock to be told while waiting in a reception area that tests must be completed before an interview can proceed.

Psychological assessment is a highly developed and skilled procedure. A trained person can help you to discover and identify your attributes, and establish their relevance to the desired occupation. As a contribution to helping you avoid failure, tests can thus serve a useful purpose. They can have the additional attraction of uncovering factors and interests which could well indicate avenues of career direction that you have not previously considered. It's surprising how often we lack the necessary insight into our own aptitude, skills and temperament. Properly constructed tests can help in this area.

A typical battery of tests would cover mental alertness, intelligence, specific aptitudes, occupational interests, temperament, general knowledge and personality. Some of these tests have a pass mark, some do not. An astute job seeker will not wait until faced by tests as part of a consultant's or employer's selection procedure, but will get help from experts, such as the government's free vocational guidance services, and practise completing tests before applying for jobs.

If you find yourself being subjected to tests, listen carefully to the instructions before beginning. Some have time limits, others have no time restrictions. In many tests, accuracy is more important than the number of questions answered; though when you are faced with a question to which the answer does not occur to you readily, move on to the next one. Treat it as an examination and return to those more difficult questions later.

As soon as practicable after you have completed a battery of tests, try to remember the questions you found difficult. Write them down and use your local library to find the correct answers. If you do receive a written

report on your test results and it reads well, photocopy spare sets and add them to your job application material you take to interviews. You may be able to avoid being subjected to more tests if another employer or consultant requires testing as an integral part of their recruitment procedures, and happens to use the same tests.

Regard tests as a necessary part of obtaining a worthwhile job. Do your very best and, providing you have satisfied yourself that the person administering them is qualified, take careful note of their results.

Though still prevalent, there is a discernible decline in the use of tests by employers as more are becoming concerned about breaking discrimination regulations where tests do not prove a close relevance to job performance.

7 Networking

Many opportunities in full-time or part-time employment are not advertised. They are often the best target for the job seeker as, once found, there will be less competition from other people. The older person, rather than the recent graduate, is more likely to succeed in this area. Why? Because these opportunities are identified through people you know and the people they know. The older we are, the greater the number of people we are likely to know.

The job within the hidden employment market may not exist at the moment, but could be created when your abilities are presented skilfully to an employer who needs to solve a problem. Within this hidden employment market part-time and 'staggered hours' prospects abound, as well as full-time employment opportunities.

Whether full-time or part-time employment is your objective, the most effective method of obtaining a job is the same—and involves two important steps. First, you need to be introduced to people who have the authority to make hiring decisions. Second, though you want a job, you should ask for their advice rather than approach them immediately as a job seeker.

Networking is a way of making contact with such people. The term 'networking' is a synonym in the 1990s for something that has existed in many other forms for centuries. In essence, it is a procedure for establishing connections, securing information and making problem-solving bridges out of shared experiences. It's a process, not an end in itself.

Networks exist, formally and informally, in all companies and organisations. They can be especially valuable to women, the physically handicapped, ethnic group members and those at the lower levels of the hierarchy of positions.

Professional associations can be an excellent arena for networking activities. Some associations are more aware of this benefit to their members and guests than others. Women and Management, the Society of Business Communicators and the Australian Institute of Training and Development are some who specifically provide networking facilities.

Personal information outweighs most of what you can find in printed material. It's the people who are doing, or have done, what you hope to accomplish who can tell you what it's really like, what obstacles need to be overcome, and how to refine a strategy to achieve your aim.

> ☛ Other people can be of little help —until you tell them how you would like them to help.

So, networking is a career management skill too potentially powerful to ignore. To make use of it, decide on the subject areas you need to know about, then resolve to find the appropriate network and obtain the following benefits.

Networking:

- increases skills and self-confidence in obtaining information;
- builds a referral base for further career explorations;

- shows initiative by acting rather than waiting;
- stimulates thoughtful appraisal of realities and options;
- often uncovers actual job vacancies.

Create your own network

Networking is about establishing communication channels to information and people. To initiate networking as a beneficial process for yourself, you do need to place yourself in the company of others with the potential to provide the data you want.

The people you know well and people you meet for the first time form an extensive network. These people know other people. Each has their own set of friends and acquaintances. Assemble a list of names and don't be inhibited by the prospect of advising them of your search for information. Shyness about revealing needs to others is a major cause of job search failure.

Use Detective Skills in Your Job Search

- Visit libraries (public, industry, professional associations).
- Compile personal contact list.
- Call people you know for additional names.
- Attend meetings where networks exist.
- Send letters requesting *information* interviews.
- Achieve minimum of two *information* interviews per week.

The hidden job market

Many employers publish notices about vacancies within their business before considering engaging an agency or placing advertisements in the press. Jobs may appear on notice boards, in circulated memos or in the company's employee newsletter or journal.

A keen job seeker can tap into this hidden employment market in two ways. First, by asking all the employed people you know to look out for news of such jobs. Second, by writing to employers in the industry in which you wish to work. Your letter should request that the recipient retain your details in anticipation of vacancies. A brief follow-up letter advising of your continued interest should be mailed every two weeks. Most applicants make one attempt to interest an employer in their skills. Just as no advertiser would rely on one television commercial or just one magazine advertisement, a job seeker may need to communicate with an employer several times. Perseverance and care in composing polite letters could bring success.

There are many people who may be able to help who could be easily overlooked. To prevent this, use this 'People I know' prompting list.

List your father, mother, all your sisters and brothers, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents. Include your spouse, girlfriend or boyfriend, and their relatives. Besides the job leads your relatives can give you, they can also talk to their fellow employees, employers, or friends for you.

Ask family friends, your doctor, dentist, accountant, solicitor, local Chamber of Commerce representative, friends in your sporting and social activities, and your community welfare officer for the names of people they know, their occupations and where to contact them.

List all your former classmates, teachers and lecturers that you can recall from high school, college or university. Thinking about the clubs you belonged to at school may help you remember some of your friends. Listing

people you went to technical college with or those who did the same course as you in college or university can be particularly beneficial, because these people may be able to give you job leads or even arrange interviews because of their daily contacts with business. Teachers and lecturers may also be a valuable source of job leads.

Include all your past and present flatmates. These were probably close friends and would not feel imposed upon when asked for help. List all the people you have previously worked with, whether it was paid or voluntary work. These people may be able to give you job leads, both where they work or where their partners or friends work, and write a letter of recommendation for you.

You may have thrown parties sometime during the last few years or attended other people's parties. You should try to remember the names of the people you invited or who invited you. List all these people because they may be able to help you in different ways. The list will probably include people who are employed in many different organisations in many different capacities. Any of them might know of job openings or of people planning to leave their jobs. They might even go as far as to talk to their employers for you. They all also have their own groups of friends, and one of them may know of a job lead for you.

If you are a member of a community, religious or professional group, you have met and been in close personal contact with many people. List all these people, including the group leader.

Think of the people you have played or presently play sport with. Often a close feeling of friendship develops in these relationships, and these people would probably be glad to offer you assistance in your job search.

List all your neighbours and the people you send Christmas cards to. They represent a wide range of occupations and contacts that can provide you with job leads, letters of recommendation and other valuable assistance.

Don't forget your landlord, bank manager, store managers and all the other people you know who are working. People who are in contact with many people each day and whose job it is to serve the public are often sources of job leads. Your postman, milkman, attendants who service your car, bus drivers, taxi drivers, and waiters and waitresses come in contact with many employers or hear of job leads that could help you find employment.

When that list of people is assembled and extended by the names of new contacts, don't be hesitant about sending them a résumé. You need to let them know what you are capable of and the achievements you have accumulated over the past years. Even your closest friends will not be completely familiar with the capabilities and successes of your employment past—they like you for other reasons.

Networking functions because of a very basic characteristic of human behaviour. People enjoy giving advice when they are not placed in a threatening relationship to the questioner. Many a busy person will gladly respond to a short note asking for an opportunity to meet with them when the purpose is clearly stated. So a polite but unambiguous letter should be sent to potential information sources in cases where you have not received a personal introduction. Samples letters for you to adapt to suit your needs are given on pages 163-164.

Value of networking

Talking to other people is a useful activity and far better than enduring the agony of waiting alone for the mail to arrive or the telephone to ring. Other people can often provide different viewpoints on your problem. Approaching others can be like jumping into cold water the first time—it's not easy to admit that you are having difficulties. But once you do, you have started to communicate and the chances of finding a solution and restoring your morale are improved.

It definitely helps to talk things over. Sometimes, just talking about a problem out loud helps to clarify it, and a sympathetic listener can be enormously supportive. You never know which networking contact will provide the clues which lead to your satisfactory re-employment.

Information interviews

Potential problem solvers get hired whatever their age, experience or qualifications, providing this ability is effectively demonstrated to the person with the authority to hire. The most effective demonstration is to show how much you know and believe you can do to help solve the problems being experienced by that particular organisation. It's too difficult and inadequate to rely on 'thinking-on-your-feet' at the interview.

The investment of your time in pre-interview research is crucial to overcome successfully any deficiencies of experience and/or qualifications. Demonstrating problem-solving ability and pre-interview research are two critical components of the most effective method of job search.

There is one more which is of equal, if not greater, importance. It has such a bearing on the likely success of the job seeker that it deserves detailed examination step by step. It's called the *information interview.*

Step One

Consider this illustration of persuasion psychology. If you want to persuade someone to do you a large favour, ask the person first for a small favour—one that's easily granted. By doing this you will increase the chances of a 'yes' response when you want the person to comply with a more substantial demand in the future. This approach can open the door to the job you really want. Most people like to talk about themselves and their problems. Few are likely to resist a request to meet you providing your approach is courteous and non-threatening.

Benefits From Information Interviews

- Build your confidence for job interviews.
- Expand your job market information.
- Become a more impressive job candidate if you have done some professional homework.
- Find out about jobs and career paths you did not know existed.
- Deepen your understanding of the employment field in a variety of settings.
- Have first-hand current information, rather than data from printed material researched in the past.
- Learn to talk to strangers about jobs as a low stress experience, enhancing your communication skills.
- Ask for information, so you are learning how to be in control of a discussion.
- Meet potential employers to whom you have not yet formally applied.

Step Two

When faced with an applicant to interview, most people feel threatened. Not necessarily because they feel you will take over their job, but threatened by the chance that if they hire you it might not work out, and they would be blamed for their apparent inadequate selection decision. An applicant heightens the interviewer's feelings of risk; they might enhance opportunities for promotion but on the other hand could also affect

professional image by not performing or behaving well. If the applicant doesn't work out, a lot of money will have been wasted. Superiors don't take kindly to this.

So, mindful of these factors, the astute job seeker looks for an opportunity for a discussion which doesn't hold these threats, a discussion where they seek information as a researcher, not as an applicant.

Step Three

In reality you could be doing both but initially you want to find out whether this industry, this occupation, this type of employment environment suits you. If, in the process of securing this information, you decide to become an applicant then a careful change in conversation direction has to be managed. Otherwise, on the basis of the first meeting you can build on the relationship created and more easily obtain a second, applicant-oriented discussion, where you will meet more comfortably, no longer being strangers to one another.

In practice, many job seekers find they don't have to manage the direction change. The person with the authority to hire often takes the initiative and invites you to be an applicant, having sized up your potential as someone who would be worthwhile to hire.

Step Four

Remind yourself over and over again that your quest is for information, that your target will talk more readily if you make your questions about their work—not your problems. This cannot be stressed strongly enough. It's the key to a successful research discussion and is the factor most likely to engineer the change to applicant status. It reverses the psychology of the whole selection interview process. You are talking about them rather than being interrogated under the 'relevant experience and qualification' mode. You are selling yourself in the process with your personal skills.

It's self-evident that you won't get very far with this four-step approach unless you have done some prior research on the particular employer, industry and target occupation. So, to give yourself a chance at success, the pre-discussion research must be carried out.

Sample letters to help you obtain network contacts and information interviews

A few moments of your time could benefit me considerably. I'm seeking employment in a position where I might be able to help solve problems and improve profitability. My past record (résumé enclosed) shows I am an achiever.

Your industry appears from my research to be the one most likely to have the challenges I seek. You could help me confirm whether this is so.

I will telephone your secretary before 10.30 am on Friday, 5 July to check when it is convenient to meet you.

I am confidentially exploring new employment opportunities in the field of marketing and believe you might be interested in assisting me.

I am hoping that you will have contact with employers to whom my particular skills and capabilities will appeal.

Please call me on to answer any questions you may have or to arrange a meeting to discuss career possibilities.

I am currently involved in researching information regarding a career in corporate banking. I understand that you are a person who could provide helpful insight into the nature of the profession and the actual rewards and difficulties.

I would appreciate very much a few moments of your time. Please telephone me on 58.3013 when convenient to your schedule.

Mr Tom Smith of ABC Ltd mentioned to me recently that you are the most likely person to provide me with sound advice.

I'm anxious to learn about the problems, challenges and rewards of your profession. You would appreciate that the printed material I have covered can only help me so far.

Just twenty minutes of your time would help immensely. I have prepared well for such an opportunity and won't inconvenience you.

Do call me on 438 0123 about a discussion date suitable to your schedule.

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8 Common questions

During the courses I conduct on job search and managing your own career, a number of questions from participants recur again and again. This chapter answers many of those questions.

I don't have access to a good typist and am reluctant to spend money on a commercial typing service, as I'm out of work. Should I use an instant print form letter to facilitate mailing the large quantities of inquiries you recommend?

A printed form letter is not in your best interests. It will be readily spotted by recipients as printed, particularly where the address is added. With the prevalence of word processors and personal computers these days, the production of large mailings is easier to arrange.

First, assemble your bulk mailing list of employers and/or employment agencies, then seek out quotes from commercial typing services. The higher the volume, the lower the unit cost per letter. Prices can vary considerably.

If you are really reluctant to spend money on such services, approach the secretarial studies teacher at your local technical college. Request that your letters be produced by the student typists as a class exercise. Or contact your local Rotary branch. I've known of many instances where their members have volunteered either free use of a word processor or access to a competent typist in the employ of a member.

I've followed the volume mailing approach by sending over 50 letters plus résumés to recruitment consultants six weeks ago. Some interviews resulted, but no job offer as yet. Should I re-contact the consultants?

Yes. Some consultants maintain excellent files of résumés forwarded to them—often using computer-based data retrieval systems. Others do not maintain résumés in anticipation of a candidate search. They prefer to place recruitment advertisements or conduct a non-public executive search for each employer authorised assignment.

So send another mailing. It could arrive at the same time a new candidate search has been commenced, for which you could be an eligible person. But before you spend your money, review all the comments you have received about your résumé. Over the past six weeks you should have sought out at least 30 people's opinions of it. There may be good reason to re-work its contents and enhance the likelihood of a more successful second mailing.

From time to time I see advertisements in the national press which have been written and paid for by job searchers. What do you think of such a method for arousing employers' interests?

A waste of your precious funds. The price of such an advertisement can finance over a hundred letters and postage to employers through a commercial typing service.

Why am I so adamant in my reply? I have contacted many people over the past ten years who have self-advertised in this way. Not one had secured a lead to a prospective employer. What they did receive were solicitations from financial planning counsellors, insurance agents, partnership proposals (providing their own cash was invested) and even brochures on payment for

funeral parlour services they will need at some time in the future!

Do you think employment agencies are useful?

There are good ones and bad ones. The good ones are an essential part of your search for a job. Remember, they hold the key to many of the jobs which are never advertised—and, by the same token, many of *their* vacancies are never advertised. As so many employers delegate the initial screening of applicants to agencies, you may not be able to afford to avoid them.

What is the first thing you look for in a résumé?

The person's career objective. What kind of job is this person looking for? It's not the business of recruiters to sort through several pages of work experience to see if there is some way the applicant can be employed. It's the applicants' responsibility to make it clear what they are looking for, and why they can do the desired job.

When I visit recruitment consultants, write to employers or attend interviews, a long employment application form is thrust at me to complete again and again. It's time-consuming and I find some of the questions irritating. Why won't my carefully assembled résumé suffice?

I know how you feel, but can't recommend a satisfactory way to avoid filling out forms without jeopardising your job search.

Some firms insist on completed and signed application forms for two reasons. They can give the employer a basis for dismissal on legal grounds if a subsequently hired applicant has falsified data. Post-hire reference inquiries may reveal this. Another reason is that the interviewer knows exactly where to look for information on a form with which he is familiar. It also facili-

tates the compilation of induction material, i.e. payroll authorisations, employee records required by law, etc., if the applicant is hired.

You may be able to get away with attaching another copy of your résumé and completing the items not answered by its contents. Remember, the résumé is designed to get you an interview—not the job—so you may have omitted some data important to the interview discussion and selection decision. An application form usually collects some of this extra information.

I am about to initiate a mailing of unsolicited inquiries direct to employers in the industry where I have the best chance of re-employment. Should I address the letters to the managing director or the personnel manager?

Perhaps neither. The key to improved effectiveness in direct mailings to employers, apart from extreme care in the content and style of the covering letter, is to address by name and position title the person most likely to be interested in meeting you. For example, if your background is marketing, then your target is the marketing director; if you are experienced in accounting, then the chief accountant, and so on.

Personnel officers usually act on candidate-search requests initiated by other senior staff within the organisation. You will be lucky if an approach directed to the personnel manager coincides with a candidate search for which you have claims for consideration.

What protection do I have over the custody and use of the personal data I am required to provide to consultants and prospective employers? The same concern applies to the comments about me that I observe interviewers recording in writing.

Unfortunately, an applicant for employment is in no real position to refuse to provide the information

sought. Any such refusal would be likely to result in a denial of progress through the selection procedure.

There is one recommendation I have, but you may find difficulty in adopting it. If you are asked to provide data which you regard as totally irrelevant to the evaluation of your candidature for the tasks of the vacancy, then leave the interview, withdrawing your application, if the interviewer persists with the request. You have acquired in the interview a very good indication that this is not the sort of employer with whom you could work well. It's a difficult decision to make on the spot, particularly if your finances are dwindling and alternative employment endeavours are not progressing satisfactorily, but it may be the best decision in the long term.

Should I reply to advertised vacancies which do not supply the recruitment consultant's or employer's name, but simply a box number?

No, unless you want your name and address to end up on direct mail lists for the promoters of books, insurance, cars, overseas holidays, cocktail shakers, massage parlours, etc.

I have noticed an advertisement for a position for which I think I am well qualified. It is being advertised by a consultancy that I have registered with recently, yet they have not contacted me. What should I do?

Remember when you were employed and arranged your work in separate filing folders, or piles on your desk? Your original documentation may just be sitting in their office in a separate file and has not been linked up with this new candidate-search assignment. So don't telephone the consultant—telephone calls can be an irritant, be ignored or forgotten. Send a specially composed covering letter relating to the advertised position and another copy of your résumé with it.

Don't assume every consultancy advertisement represents a genuine vacancy. It is not unknown for false vacancies to be advertised to maintain the consultancy's image as being busy, or to gather in a collection of résumés of current job searchers in anticipation of new business.

After a bad experience when my previous job search concluded, I am anxious to clarify some of the legal aspects of an employer making an offer.

Employment law is classified under both industrial and contract law. The latter provides that in offering employment and receiving acceptance a master-servant relationship is established—in fact, a contract of service. This contract is established by an actionable promise(s), either verbal or in writing, i.e. the agreement made between two parties whereby legal rights and obligations are created which both parties have agreed to accept.

A contract of employment is created in situations when the circumstances of the work to be performed are the employer's right to dictate where and when the work is to be done; where the employer's equipment and materials are to be used; and whether payment is to be by regular wages or salary or by lump sum to carry out a specific task(s).

The employer's legal obligations to an employee are to abide by the *minimum* conditions detailed in relevant Federal and State awards and Acts of Parliament relating to annual leave, long service leave, workers' compensation, health and protective equipment standards and much more.

Essentially, the employer is required to provide a safe place in which to work, adequate equipment and materials to carry out the work, and to pay no less than the relevant award minimum wages, plus benefits such as tea breaks and sick leave as prescribed. Most other aspects are negotiable issues between the applicant and employer.

I am employed in one city and want to secure employment in another before resigning. Not many recruitment advertisements in my field are in the nationally distributed newspapers at present. What is my best course of action?

Extend your review of recruitment advertisements to the professional journals and magazines related to your field. Contact the secretary of the branch of your professional association in the city in which you would like to work. Subscribe to that city's major suburban newspapers where additional vacancies could be advertised. Ask the Commonwealth Employment Service to notify their branches there.

These are some of the activities you should initiate but your success is more likely to result from the following procedure.

Invest in a five-day visit to your target location. Take annual leave or leave without pay from your current employer. Plan well in advance of your departure by using the directories in the reference section of your local public library and assemble a mailing list of possible employers and the recruitment consultants and employment agencies. You will need at least 150 carefully selected addresses.

Plan the trip well in advance. At least two weeks before you arrive, send a carefully worded letter (and your résumé) to the potential employers you have identified. State clearly that you are seeking information both on the company and also on the possibility of a job being vacant in the future. Also state that if a position were vacant, you would take it up within one month or two—and that you have realistic expectations about relocation expenses, etc.

Remember that this is a letter seeking information—not an application for a job. The potential employer has not asked you to visit. Your letter has to be written in such a way as to make a decision with you during your visit seem worthwhile to the company.

I am over 40, have lost my job three times due to circumstances other than my work performance. Is there any point in applying to the public service to obtain a 'safer' job?

Yes! The diversity of jobs in the public service is considerable. You must decide first of all, whether you want to work for Federal, State, local council or agencies of a semi-governmental nature.

Each of these employs personnel in a great variety of occupations. You have got to decide where it is you want to work, what skills you want to be able to use and what it is you want to do. And study the special way in which it is customary for selection panels in the Public Service to expect your data to be submitted. It differs from the private sector.

Public servants and council employees are no different from other employees. People retire, leave or die every month—and not all the positions they held are obliterated after their departure, despite fund cutbacks. The government, in its various forms and levels, still employs millions of people. When the market gets tight, it does not necessarily mean that you should turn elsewhere.

But what you do need is an 'inside coach'. Identify a public servant, make a friend and get briefed on the system for processing job applications.

I have noticed several references to computer-aided job search services. Are they of any use?

Yes, with reservations. There are a number of recruitment consultants providing computer-based matching services for employers and job seekers. Providing that you can obtain reassurance that your data is sent only to employers to which you agree, such services can speed up your contact with prospective employers who indicate interest in your credentials and employment objective.

The Commonwealth Employment Service has also developed Job Bank and is quickly extending it to their network of CES Job Centres. The Job Bank network can be used by any employer, free of charge. As soon as an employer's vacancy comes into a CES Job Centre, it is stored on their central computer. From there, it can be distributed immediately to every suitable CES Job Centre in Australia. The information is automatically printed out on an easy-to-read card and placed on job display boards under the appropriate category.

Should I include a photograph with my job application?

Only if you are applying for jobs where appearance is relevant to the selection decision, such as hospitality, tourism, retail or media. If you photograph well, enclose an appropriate photograph. Arrange for a professional photographer—a holiday snap will be of no use. The ideal is a passport-size photograph, with you wearing clothes which are suitable for that particular job.

When the photograph is taken, arrange for a number of duplicates to be made—it will save you time and money.

Of all the tasks undertaken during my search for a job in accountancy, sifting through endless editions of newspapers searching for job vacancies is undoubtedly the most arduous and time consuming apart from being expensive and tedious! Do you know a better way?

Yes, any serious attempt to become fully aware of all current vacancies is beyond the time and financial resources of most job seekers. You may miss a relevant advertisement because of the job title used, the size of the advertisement, inappropriate listing, not reading the advertisement fully, using the wrong newspaper or edi-

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tion, or not being able to obtain certain newspapers or editions.

At the end of all your efforts, can you be sure that you did not miss that vital vacancy? I do know of a quicker alternative, called media clipping services.

These services monitor all periodicals and newspapers. For a relatively small fee, you can subscribe to such a service, and cancel your subscription with one week's notice when your job search concludes. Such services can be located in the Yellow Pages directories.

My transcript of tertiary education studies records several failures. I fear this will jeopardise my job-seeking chances.

You did achieve the degree. You achieved it when 72 per cent of those who start such courses withdraw during their studies. You are not required to submit to employers the transcript of grades awarded for each subject unless asked. The ways in which to reduce your risks include:

- Send a photocopy of the degree or diploma certificate and the chances of being asked for more details are reduced.

- Obtain a reference letter from the student counsellor or a lecturer with whom you got on well. This letter should comment favourably on your attitude and behaviour during your studies.

- If you changed study program or subjects midstream, type a note, to be attached to the transcript, which states that you began with an inappropriate course selection, but obtained good advice which caused a change.

Your attitude towards your results is the most important thing. You should feel pride in having conquered

adversity and seen the study program through to its satisfactory completion.

Has the older person, for example of 45 or over, a realistic chance to change or realign career direction?

Most certainly—but with difficulty! The obstacles are primarily in convincing others such as recruitment consultants, employers, senior personnel, etc. In addition, your family can also be resistant. As they care for you they may fear you could be hurt by failure or rebuttal. They may also feel that their lifestyle may be threatened. Yet the older person has a greater wealth of experiences on which to draw. This can help in skills analysis and persuasion ability. Older people can also call on their past record of overcoming all kinds of obstacles.

You may feel confident and well-prepared, but the environment in which you will set out to make a career transition is usually resistant and negative. Physical and/or mental tiredness—such as the feeling of having 'yet another mountain in life to climb'—can also play a part.

The key to successful career transition for the older person is to target the right type of job tasks and the right employer. There is little point in applying to large organisations. However, smaller enterprises are interested more in an applicant's ability to solve problems than in their date of birth. Community service organisations, industry associations, foundations and small businesses are also more likely to be fruitful targets. So you need skill in presenting your career record in a form that doesn't just list duties and responsibilities, but clearly states evidence of your achievements.

Résumés compiled in this way are critical to such transitions. You should design the content in a functional (i.e. skills-based) rather than a chronological format. The next strategy is to research prospective employers to ascertain where these transferable skills could be used and to develop a mailing list. Applications

should be sent, uninvited, to a number of prospective employers whom your research has revealed as likely to have problems your considerable experience can help solve.

The answer to those who face an age barrier, either in employer attitudes or occupational entry requirements, is to find others who have a need for what you know and who consequently covet your expertise. In such cases, issues of age become less important to them, as hiring decision makers, because they need your skills to meet their commercial needs and aspirations.

Networking is also a necessary strategy. Older people usually have many contacts to call on. Someone you know may in turn know of a suitable job opportunity.

Use all your local community service organisations in order to network and find those that have a need for your skills. Inquire of Rotary, Lions, Parish Council, RSL and Kiwanis. Seek opportunities to meet their members. Declare confidently and clearly what you can offer and the purpose of your request for their help in introductions. Check with local TAFE teachers—in your area of skill—for leads to potential employers.

Be warned that responding to recruitment advertisements is usually a waste of time. Use the wisdom acquired over the years to devise job-seeking strategies with guile and avoid the directions younger people are taking, where there is considerable competition.

I accepted a position with a company just two months ago and things haven't worked out they way I thought they would. I'm back job searching a second time and wondering how I should explain this to consultants or employer interviewers.

Just the same way as you have stated your situation to me! Tell them that you made an error. Recruiters rarely warm to the perfect applicant. It is just not rational to find a candidate without some problem with their career record. To try subterfuge will just interfere with your

interview poise and reduce your chances—not improve them.

Before reviving your job search efforts you should pause to consider two things:

- It took some effort to obtain your new job. Is it really unsalvageable? Have you talked over your concerns with people who may help change things for the better? It would be unfair to yourself not to explore the possibility of your career continuing on a more satisfactory basis and thus avoid the vexation of another job search campaign.

- Pause and give yourself time to think through why it was a mistake, so that you reduce the likelihood that it will recur. Be very cautious of accepting the first offer you receive. Check it against the career goal criteria you have written for choosing your next career move. You do have such a document, don't you?

My current employer has told me to look for another job. What actions should I take?

You should try to obtain a number of resources from your current employer before taking steps to secure another position. You should also make special efforts to leave with the good regard of others. You are likely to have reference inquiries made during the job search so you should depart as amiably as possible.

Prepare a list of tasks to be done by you. Seek the agreement of your supervisor so that you leave your present position in a good order for your successor.

Request outplacement support. This is a service provided by professional consulting firms which is paid for by the terminating employer. The service helps with career targeting, job search strategy, résumé design and interview training. In addition, you can often get prac-

tical help in coping with the stress of the transition phrase.

Ask for office space and secretarial support from the date you formally stop work. This can provide a useful base for your job seeking and reduce your costs.

Write a draft reference and ask your supervisor to consider signing it. Make sure you include mention of the tasks that you have done well. Once you have actually left, you will have no control over what might be said or written about you in response to inquiries from recruitment consultants or prospective employers.

Inform your family. You will need their support and understanding. It may not be forthcoming if you allow pride to get in the way. The same applies to your close friends. After all, they may represent your best job-seeking strategy by increasing your network and acting as spotters for employment opportunities.

I have noticed many seminars which provide tuition in assertiveness. Is this important for managing my job search ?

Assertion is about interpersonal effectiveness, the ability to communicate with people without misunderstandings. If you have come away from an interview or conversation feeling that something was left unsaid or unclear, or that someone was tricked, used or made to feel guilty, then that was not an assertive interaction. If you felt that you had expressed what was important to you and allowed the other person to respond in their own way, then regardless of the final outcome, you behaved assertively.

Being assertive refers to a way of handling interactions and confrontations. It does not mean getting your own way every time, or winning a battle of wits. In practice, assertive behaviour in any interaction will most likely produce a result which is positive and acceptable for you but which does not make others feel that they have been unfairly exploited.

The reason assertiveness can sound difficult is that we tend to believe that talking around a subject or dropping hints is preferable to being direct; or that we must offer excuses or justifications for our actions. We often do this by being falsely apologetic so that people will not think the worst of us. Usually, the more we think about such situations the more likely it is that misunderstanding, resentment or friction will be the outcome.

Self-assertive behaviour is usually the simplest form of communicating as it fulfils six major requirements of effective interactions. It ensures that they will be direct, honest, appropriate, open to further discussion by all concerned, informative and, above all, responsible.

You should think about your recent behaviour and experiences in interactions with other people. By considering what I have said in describing assertive behaviour, the value of attending a course in assertion training should be clearer to you.

The topics you are likely to study during such training include:

- Specific techniques for dealing with: put-downs; guilt trips; unreasonable requests; defensiveness.
- Non-verbal techniques: how to give any message more impact.
- Office politics: how to handle people who work against you behind the scenes.
- How to say no without feeling guilty or antagonising the other person.
- The four steps to changing other people's negative behaviour.
- Being clear: how to present your ideas concisely.
- When and how to confront.

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- How to criticise—and praise—positively.
- How to respond to hostile criticism.
- Techniques that will reduce mistakes and misunderstandings immediately.
- How to handle people who deliberately ignore and interrupt you.
- Assertive persistence: how to get your way way when you know you're right.
- How to express anger without being hostile, and how to deal with other people's anger.
- The keys to behaving professionally in a crisis.
- How to disagree without getting into an argument.
- What to do when you're wrong or overruled.
- The hidden ways people may be manipulating you, and what to do about them.
- How to get cooperation when you don't have formal power.

How can I convince recruiters that I will settle down to hard work despite my record of changing jobs and careers?

You could be surprised to learn how many people have similar employment records before settling down. In fact, it is often this variety of employment experiences which will help them to perform in their new career. The contrast in types of work tasks and employers has enabled them to sort out what they really like and can

do well and what they should avoid in future employment.

You can turn what you regard as a liability into an asset. It is this very variety which you should stress to interviewers by pointing out the advantages of your employment record and the many skills you have acquired. This strategy is particularly useful as you can illustrate how your past experience has contributed to formulating your new career objective. You are, in fact, a better investment than a person who may be better qualified but lacks conviction that their career choice is the best one.

So rewrite your résumé highlighting what you have gained in terms of skills and achievements in your contrasting jobs. Your résumé should not be just a long list of past employers, dates of employment and job titles. Use a narrative or functional skills format in the design of your résumé. The chronological format can be self-defeating and reduce your chances of scoring interview invitations.

When would you recommend that a person seeks career counselling help?

Where you find yourself at a crossroads in the following areas:

- ***Uncertainty over tertiary course selection*** Here the outcomes in terms of real benefits to your personal needs and career goals must be evaluated. The career implications of completing the course successfully require examination and you should seek informed advice before you commit yourself to an extensive program of study.

- ***Coping with redundancy or unemployment*** Coming to terms with your situation, identifying ways to cope, and finding the personal resources to re-establish your career in a more fruitful

environment. Consideration of career change may also be beneficial in such situations.

- ***Inability to make a career decision*** Where you lack confidence about personal potential, recognition of real or imaginary blocks and barriers to implementing ideas, or conflict in family or relationships over your proposed plans.

- ***Loss of confidence or fear of rejection*** Either can occur when you need to make promotion, transfer or job-seeking applications. Counselling can be beneficial and provide useful coping techniques for feelings of increasing uncertainty about your future. Learning how to maintain and even enhance the momentum of your job search and your ability to plan may also be relevant.

The above is a checklist of the kinds of problems skilled career counsellors regularly encounter. Such a service can help put your situation in perspective, and establish what changes you can and should consider. It will also help you understand yourself so that you can identify the most appropriate career strategy.

You should be able to reach better decisions based on a systematic analysis of yourself and the alternatives open to you. Above all, you should be able to benefit from uninhibited conversation, unbiased advice and companionship during your career transition.

I have a minor health problem which could eliminate me from further consideration by an uninformed consultant or recruitment officer.

There are usually two stages of recruitment where health issues occur. The first is the one you describe and the other is a medical examination for entry to a superannuation fund with, or without, life assurance or disability insurance cover. Let's deal with each in turn.

The problem is to what extent you should level with a recruitment consultant or prospective employer when asked to respond to questions about health on application forms. It is quite unrealistic for them to demand such responses before you have been given a full appreciation of the physical and mental requirements of the job. These forms usually have to be completed before interviews are conducted and are sometimes used to decide who will be interviewed. Even then, the only person competent to provide unambiguous advice is one trained in occupational health and work environment analysis—a three-year full-time tertiary education level course! This fact may help you with your decision, which is a highly personal and moral one.

My approach would be to write words to the effect 'No health condition that would affect my performance of the job demands according to my knowledge of them at this stage.'

Just as a precaution, and for your own reassurance, I would obtain from your doctor a written statement as to any limitations you may have in performing work generally. You may not need to show such a letter but it could be useful to have it ready.

If, subsequently, you are required to undergo a consultation with the employer's nominated medical practitioner, a greater degree of frankness is recommended as there are legal implications of withholding pertinent information about your health. Nevertheless, in this situation your data will be judged according to far more valid criteria than the inadequate general health knowledge of a consultant or recruitment officer.

Just a brief additional tip. If your health condition precludes your admittance to the employer's employment benefits fund, but not your appointment to the job, you are entitled to apply to join a fund external to the employer's. If accepted, you would be required to pay the total contributions towards the insurances and assurances it provides. The law now prohibits the refusal of employment to a person who arranges alter-

native superannuation fund membership but is otherwise acceptable for a position.

I am likely to be confronted with psychological tests while job searching. Can I get out of this as I do not believe that they would be helpful?

If during your job search you are confronted with the necessity to undergo testing, the following will help you:

- Sadly, even when people genuinely try to answer tests truthfully, they often lack sufficient insight into their own personality to do so. Hence, you should read books on self-assessment and human psychology first! Learn how to beat the testing system by borrowing the writings of Eysenck on psychological testing from your local library. Or order *How to Take a Test* from the Australian Council for Educational Research in Hawthorn, Victoria.

- It could pay dividends to hire a psychologist to give you some practice sessions in completing tests and reviewing the results. This may enable you to respond in different ways in order to increase your chances of selection.

- Try not to be bothered by the fact that so many tests in use in this country are designed as diagnostic devices to identify mental disorders and not for the selection of applicants with a 'normal' personality.

The accurate and appropriate use of tests requires a wide range of skills and attributes. This includes knowledge relating to the tests' theoretical orientation, standardisation sample (often the American population!) reliability and validity. One could consider asking if the test administrator knows whether the particular test

variables have been proven to be relevant to the actual job for which you are being assessed. Furthermore, I would be reluctant to undergo any testing where access to the interpretation of my responses is denied to me, and where no reassurance is provided that the report will be shredded or given to me when the testing has served its purpose.

I would like to think that your questions to the test administrator would be received supportively and that you would be provided with data on what scores are to be used to make the employment decision. I would consider questions like the following important ones to have clarified:

- Is the selected test based on specific criteria that relate not to any job, but the one for which I have applied?

- Has there been an objective measurement of what constitutes effective performance in the job?

- Has a significant relationship been established between the possession of desired personality characteristics and the ability to perform the job?

- Does the test really measure what it says it measures?

- What are the implications of how the test was standardised?

If you carry out this form of pre-test questioning I fear that you will, unfortunately, be shown the way out. So you may have to proceed to be tested until our equal employment opportunity legislation is extended to reflect the situation in the United States where it is illegal to use a test in selection procedures unless that test measures what it is supposed to measure on a consistent

basis, and is clearly related to the actual job vacancy and its satisfactory performance criteria.

I feel like a good holiday before facing the stress of seeking re-employment. Is this the best action to take?

You are likely to feel low in spirit and be eager to seek distracting, pleasant experiences to replace awkward feelings. Yet the wisest course is to postpone your holiday. The more important task is to analyse your career and evaluate your options. Next write a detailed plan for the job seeking ahead. Prepare your résumé, mailing lists, interview questions and answers and obtain agreement from those you wish to be your referees. When this has been done thoroughly, take a short holiday.

However, do bear in mind that the most likely decision makers on your re-employment are absent from their desks on average for more than 160 days each year due to weekends, public holidays, business travel, sickness, vacations, conference attendance, meetings, funerals of relatives and acquaintances, jury duty, employee picnic days, rostered days off, flexitime, etc—a factor which should influence your taking a short holiday rather than a long one. There are few days left in any one year when your job application will get any attention.

Another argument for delaying your holiday is that few people really rest or enjoy the time because they are worried about not having a plan of action. This causes additional worry in the already threatening situation of being unemployed.

I make these recommendations to you regardless of the amount of severance pay or accrued employment benefits payout that you receive. The important thing is to maintain the stability of your psychological state. In other words, bolster your morale—not your bank balance.

Where is the justice in being told that I had the best qualifications for the vacancy yet did not secure the job offer?

You are viewing job application selection as a logical process when, in fact, it is a highly subjective one. Emotional factors play a significant part in influencing the decision maker in the choice of recruit. Qualifications are but one factor among many.

The interviewer or panel of interviewers usually select the person with whom they feel most comfortable. Of course, most interviewers would deny this and argue that their decision making is free from personal bias. Despite anti-discrimination laws, interviewers will still choose candidates who have values similar to theirs and with whom some personal chemistry or feeling of liking has been established.

Study the nature of the interviewer. Search for clues on which empathy can be built. Learn the art of negotiation from a suitable book from a library or book store. Focus on analysing the conversation during interviews and taking advantage of opportunities to present yourself better.

Do less promoting of your qualifications, regardless of the personal effort you have put into acquiring them. They have secured you the interview—now it is time to win the job offer with different methods, i.e. your interpersonal influencing skills. If qualifications were the only factor, employers would select solely from written applications and not conduct selection interviews.

As my résumé includes a clearly expressed employment objective and my contact information, why should I add a covering letter to my job application?

There are two reasons why you should. The first is that it is normal business protocol. Sending in a résumé by itself may suggest to the recipient that you are a casual inquirer rather than a genuinely keen applicant.

The second, and more important reason, is that it provides you with an opportunity to increase your chances. Your covering letter should contain at least one additional 'worthpoint' to enhance your appeal to this particular employer. But don't just state it and assume the employer will interpret it as relevant. You need to link up your additional worthpoint directly to the prospective employer's needs indicated in the vacancy information.

How much time do I have between receiving an employment offer and saying yes or no? Also, once accepted, how can I delay starting without upsetting the new relationship?

There is no single answer for either question, but in both cases you must take time out for thoughtful appraisal before acting. It can be upsetting when an employer wants a quick answer even though it may be more than eight weeks since your first contact.

But you owe it to yourself to pause and check back against the criteria you established (I hope!) at the start of your job search. What were your objectives? To what extent does the offer meet them? What additional advantages have emerged for a decision in their favour? What is the real status, apart from just encouraging words, of your other job leads? You may have to make some follow-up inquiries but not, please, with the purpose of trying to bribe a higher offer than the one you have just received. When this review is complete, then respond with a courteous letter which legally confirms your acceptance of employment, or which declines it politely.

Now for the need to unwind from the tensions and confusions of your job search. A vacation, or at the minimum no work activity, is important for the next two weeks before starting. To think of no work at all, to look at new surroundings—so that when you start your senses are alert, refreshed and your physical energy

improved. This may frustrate your new boss but speak frankly about the need for such a break and the benefit to the new employer. To leave an employer on a Friday and start with the new one the following Monday is plain foolishness! It will be a long time before you are eligible for a paid holiday.

Is there any point in turning up at the reception area of an employer for whom I may want to work?

It is true that well-known employers receive many job applications—both unsolicited and in response to their advertisements. With so much competition, it may be tempting to consider just turning up. But those responsible for recruitment are usually busy people and are unlikely to spend time with you without an appointment. The value of a 'full-frontal' lies not so much in securing an interview as in finding out from the receptionist the names of people in charge of the areas in which you want to work. At the same time you can ask for printed material which will provide useful information about the employer.

At your leisure you can compose a letter personally addressed to the right decision maker and mention that you have taken the initiative to call in to secure information about the business. Reading it has affirmed your interest in being employed there. Attach your résumé and mail it, making sure you have the correct spelling of the person's name and the right job title. By demonstrating your initiative in conducting this research and making this effort, your unsolicited letter is likely to get attention and an interview invitation.

I am confused as to which recruitment consultants I should contact.

I am not surprised at your confusion. At the time of writing there are over 700 employment agency licenceholders in New South Wales alone.

Many assist employers with candidates for all professional categories. A few specialise in some occupations. Others discriminate between salary levels. In addition there are agencies which restrict their operations to temporary or part-time work. Even the placement industry association, The Institute of Personnel Consultants, does not include all of them.

You should consider investing your money to buy the time and knowledge of a job search counsellor who knows where to target your job search in order to obtain quick and effective results. Otherwise you may waste time and money contacting consultants who have no interest in the geographical areas or occupation in which you are seeking employment. Alternatively, to find these industry or occupation specialists, telephone a major company that operates in your chosen field. Ask the personnel officer for the names of the consultants with whom this employer deals.

9 Job sharing

A fast growing facility in our employment practices is the job-sharing, or job-splitting, arrangements being adopted by many employers where two people are hired for one job and split the working week. This growth has occurred with little public visibility. It is characterised by a variety of employment arrangements negotiated informally by those involved. It remains a rare occurrence to read a recruitment advertisement which seeks applicants specifically interested in job sharing.

This reorganisation of work time has the potential for people to work less and enjoy it more; it provides more time for education, family, home management or hobbies, and a significant opportunity to enhance the quality of life. It can appeal to those with the imagination to develop new approaches to their juggling of time allocation between conflicting priorities.

> ☛ *Job sharing is where one full-time position is shared by two or more persons attending work at different times, with pay and benefits divided according to their attendance schedule.*

Employers who currently run job-sharing schemes prefer to divide the working week into two periods of 2.5 days, but occasionally jobs are split into all mornings and all afternoons, and there are examples of employees successfully working alternate weeks or even months.

One of the advantages of job sharing is that it can be adapted to a very wide range of occupations. It has made flexible working arrangements possible in many professions not suited to conventional part-time work.

Among responsibilities which job sharers have successfully divided are those of university lecturers, journalists, accountants, librarians, doctors, research officers, lawyers and teachers. There is now a growing recognition of job sharing by employers, and sharing arrangements have recently been introduced by several major companies, insurance firms and banks.

The University of Western Australia recently appointed on a job-sharing basis two women to the position of equity officers. It is a first for the University in creating a job-share at a high level. The equity officers are responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of equal opportunity and affirmative action. They provide advice to staff and students on equity issues and are responsible for developing and presenting training programs to enhance awareness of equity issues.

The option of having more flexible working hours is an important affirmative action issue for women with family responsibilities. Job-sharing arrangements have enabled the women to maintain their careers alongside their child-care responsibilities.

Job-sharing arrangements bring a number of potential benefits. Because it can be applied to a variety of vacancies, job sharing can create more opportunities for working part-time when the number of full-time vacancies has been drastically reduced. The terms and conditions which job sharers accept are proportionally the same as those of a full-time job, and consequently they can take advantage of fringe benefits and holiday entitlements at no additional expense to the employer.

Many job sharers also enjoy the chance to work closely together, which not only makes the work more satisfying, but also fosters greater efficiency. They can bring to the job several years of training, experience and

skills. It is important that the job sharers are compatible, although not necessarily the same, in personality, attitude and outlook. The gain seems to be not only two brains and two sets of skills for the price of one, but also two types of energy compacted into one job.

Job sharing thus provides people with a way of combining the flexibility of part-time work with the working conditions and fringe benefits of full-time employment. However, setting up a job-sharing arrangement requires more time and greater commitment than simply registering with an employment agency or placing an advertisement for a job-sharing vacancy. It is very important that you work out in advance the practical details of the day-to-day running of the job and devise a working arrangement which can be put into practice without any additional administrative problems. Aspects you will have to consider are:

- How will you divide up the working week (2.5 days each; 3/2 days; 4/1 days; mornings/ afternoons)?

- Will you share the same desk/work area?

- How will you divide the responsibilities (e.g. will you split specific tasks or allocate specific clients)?

Experimentation with job sharing occurs more often in response to individual employees' or job applicants' requests rather than as a policy determination initiated by employers' management. Its achievement often needs to be proposed and negotiated by individuals, demanding care and skill in the method of communicating the desire. The cooperation and collaboration needed between the two people involved makes a job-sharing achievement one of teamwork, research and planning.

In some cases, jobs have been restructured into split-level positions, i.e. where two work part-time at differ-

ent skill and pay levels but provide full-time coverage. These situations are in the minority and the approach likely to succeed usually involves one person identifying another with similar skills, qualifications and experience before a request to an employer is made.

Benefits of a Job-Sharing Arrangement

- Greater efficiency, because peaks of work can be covered more effectively.
- Higher productivity, because both the job sharers will be working shorter hours and therefore will be at higher energy levels.
- Greater continuity of work, because one should be able to carry on with at least half the work and possibly all of it, if the other falls sick, leaves the job or takes holiday or maternity/paternity leave.

The decision to approve hiring two people, or more, instead of one for a full-time position will be cautiously approached. Before such a new idea is presented to a current employer or a prospective one, it is critically important to learn about the organisation and the problems in the targeted work environment. For the job sharers, some pre-proposal considerations will be:

- Can I afford it financially?
- Can I afford it professionally?
- Can I adjust to a shared arrangement?
- What do I expect to give to such a sharing situation?
- Am I ready to share my job?

- With whom can I pair my skills and experience?

The job-sharing trend is now an established one. Current economic and social developments are moving towards greater acceptance of diverse lifestyles and the recognition by employers of the desirability of allowing employees more options—subject to their commercial and administrative needs being met. Job sharing has demonstrated that more people can be provided with employment and that employers can be more flexible in their staffing approaches.

Peter Drucker, an expert in modern management, writes: 'Two people who successfully share one full-time job can prove to management that innovative work-time options are possible. By helping to create an atmosphere which supports change, job sharers are like points on a curve which signifies a new direction.'

Job-Sharing Employment Application
(Structure for a joint 'synergy' résumé)

	Partner A	Partner B
Objective		
Work experience		
Qualifications		
Summary of skills		
Proposed attendance schedule		
Personal data		
Combined areas of competence		

Checklist for a good job-sharing agreement

Compensation

- Salary: Are you clear about which salary classification you will each have on being hired?

- Fringe benefits: What is your share of holiday time or sick leave? How much will be contributed annually to your pension plan?

Work schedules

- How freely can you and your job-share partner trade time or change schedules?

- Does your employer expect to be able to call on you for more than your contracted hours if extra coverage is necessary? If so, how will you be compensated (time off, straight salary, overtime)?

- Has your plan for covering partner meeting time (regularly scheduled or ad hoc) been discussed and approved by your supervisor?

- Does your employer expect you to take over for your partner when this person is ill, on vacation?

- If one of you decides to leave, will a new partner be hired so the job can remain shared? Will the remaining partner cover the job full-time until a replacement can be found?

Responsibility and accountability

- Is it clearly understood who will be responsible for particular tasks?

- Is it clearly understood where the final, overall accountability lies?

- Has a basis for performance evaluation been established?

Policy issues

- Is there a policy which defines the conditions under which either or both of you can apply to return to full-time employment at a later date?

- Is there a procedure which will include the remaining partner in the selection of a new partner if this becomes necessary?

10 Coping with stress

A sudden change in circumstances may have forced you to seek a job or change your career for the first time in many years. Or perhaps you feel the urge to change your employment surroundings, obtain new challenges, meet new people. You may have little or no experience in modern job-searching techniques.

If you are having difficulty in finding alternative employment, you may feel that you have an unusual problem which is preventing your success. After you have tried for what seems like too long, a period of despondency may set in. Beware! The major obstacle to achieving your employment goal may be the loneliness which accompanies this despondency. The sort of loneliness which reduces your self-confidence, makes writing positive job applications very hard work and attending face-to-face job interviews more stressful than they really should be. Loneliness can make you want to shut yourself away from other people, to slow down or even stop your inquiries about employment opportunities.

It is a rare person who does not experience this. If you are out of work you miss the familiar faces, voices and momentum of the duties of your previous employment. Days go by too slowly. Your applications and messages to consultants or employers seem to take far too long to get a response.

It is true that only you can be interviewed and get a job offer. But there is no reason why all other aspects of job searching should be carried out alone. Looking for employment is not a badge of shame. It should not be a secretive operation that as few people know about as

possible. You have every reason to develop a support group and no reason to avoid it.

It is just the time to recruit your friends, neighbours and relatives as your support group. They can help—if you ask them—by checking over your self-appraisal and commenting on the search for your talents and skills; they can assess the standard of your job application writing and to help you to conduct interview practice sessions.

Self-Defeating Tendencies

Some of the self-defeating tendencies observed when people lose their employment are:

- Rushing into the job search.
- Expecting immediate results.
- Taking the first job offer.
- Avoiding seeking help from friends and connections.
- Placing availability adverts before planning is well under way.
- Escaping from personal career analysis and life planning tasks.
- Dwelling on the past.
- Blaming self.
- Accusing the past employer of malpractice.
- Provoking arguments with partner with whom they live.

Don't sit at home pondering your plight. Look up old friends and contacts, research new employment opportunities and mix with other people. Critically review your application letters and résumé. Rewrite them in different ways. Practise responding to likely interview questions on your cassette recorder or with a friend. Dress as though you are employed—you cannot keep your shoulders erect in sloppy casual clothes. Mix with other people and do not be too shy to seek help.

How Counselling Services Can Help

They may help you find solutions to the following:

- Feeling of lack of confidence about personal potential.
- Recognition of real or imaginary barriers to implementing career actions.
- Coping with increasing uncertainty about future.
- Clarification of interests, values, skills, abilities.
- Depth and extent of information about career path alternatives.
- How to relate to interviewers.
- Awareness of changing career aspirations or lifestyle considerations.
- How to cope with feelings of job search boredom and depression.
- Questioning of present qualification level and training.

There are few job seekers who have not experienced the loneliness and fluctuating despondency of job searching. You will be surprised how helpful and supportive others can be—even people you don't know well. Techniques which worked well for them could be useful for you, but you won't learn about them unless you talk to other people.

If you are not job searching, but reading this book for other reasons, spare some time for someone you know who is looking for employment. By contacting them you could be providing the critical nudge over the major morale hurdle for a job seeker, whether you are a family member, friend, acquaintance, neighbour or a stranger. Your gesture could break the paralysis of inaction so many job seekers experience. Talking about problems is an essential step for the job searcher before the person can once again move forward towards their goal in occupational life. You never know, you may make a new friend of someone who was just an acquaintance.

What a Counsellor Can Do for You

A counsellor is likely to provide you with:

- Systematic assessment of abilities, qualifications, experiences and career plans, so that you gain a fuller appreciation of all that can be offered to an employer.
- Guided exploration of career actions, since you may have a restricted knowledge of how your background can be best put to use.
- Help with the preparation of a résumé.
- Assertiveness training to improve skills in self-presentation.

Chances are there are hundreds of people in the same situation or who have recently experienced it. Wharfies, lawyers, printers, professors, typists, engineers and architects are all experiencing the demoralising effects of being made redundant or falling foul of a personality who has used their power and influence to terminate their employment. They have not necessarily bungled anything or performed their jobs incompetently. New technology, takeovers, mergers, the economic slump all have their victims. The older person, when a victim of these circumstances, will likely have regular financial commitments such as mortgages, school fees or elderly parents to support. Many feel acute hurt to their pride and develop strong resentment about their situation.

Surprising as it may seem to you, employers do not generally terminate the employment of poor performers or those unable to cope with change. The more likely victims of involuntary terminations are the more intelligent, resilient and innovative employees. People who have to go are usually those who have not been able to enhance their skill at office politics or who have felt that political behaviour at work is not for them. Terminated people have been frequently independent-minded, sometimes unconventional and imaginative in the performance of their work tasks. They lost their jobs as a result of their behaviour, not their abilities. However, significantly, they lacked an awareness of how their behaviour affected others.

If this describes you, take heart! You have already taken an important recovery step by purchasing *Win That Job!* and that's half the battle—getting yourself going with positive action. The objective being to find more satisfactory employment.

Another way of coping is to understand the symptoms which are causing your mind and body to run down. At first you probably felt a kind of release. Suddenly you had time to potter around your home—enjoy

the relief from the strain of commuting to and from work. You may have experienced optimism, thinking this was a chance to obtain a better job. When you didn't find a new position quickly, hope probably gave way to anger and depression. You turned in on yourself, feeling lost and let down. Your confidence deteriorated. You ate badly and lost sleep. Apathy and despair often result.

There is a natural tendency among job seekers to dwell on the past rather than focus their thoughts on the future. The task at hand—re-employment—is the important matter.

Becoming Unstuck in Your Job Search

Sleep more—to revitalise and provide new energy

Talk more—to get anger out of the system

Understand—more information is required to move ahead

Commit—to one decision area—to unlock others

Know that—the job that fits you does not come without a price

Action is need to restore you to your real self. Collect as much literature as you can on your rights as an unemployed person from government departments. Register with the Commonwealth Employment Service. Investigate retraining possibilities—talk to a counsellor at your local technical college.

Identifying your reactions to a rejection

Here are some feelings you may have when you receive that telephone call or reject letter:

1 I'm not surprised, I'm not good enough for that job anyway.

2 It's the end, I'm no good and never will be.

3 I don't understand, I did everything right.

4 They can go jump, I don't need to work there.

5 It was probably going to be a lousy place anyhow.

6 I know I can do better next time.

7 That was good practice—I know what needs fixing.

Anger and resignation are expressed in all but 6 and 7. These two sentiments show that you are ready to try again. We're not interested in whether your reactions are RIGHT or WRONG, but the first five simply misdirect your energy. This can either hinder your progress or completely prevent you from moving in any direction. A way of overcoming negative reactions to rejections is to create a 'feel-good' list.

How to create and use your 'feel-good' list

Sit quietly by yourself in a comfortable location and recall and write down several really fantastic times you had that made you feel great, 10 on a scale of 1—10.

Treat each '10' event as a useful tool to keep you thinking and feeling positive about your job hunting and overcoming your unproductive reactions to rejections.

Recall all the sensations that came up during and after your '10' event—the feelings, the colours, the sounds. Run these through your mind like a wonderful movie you're watching and starring in at the same time. Enhance all the good sensations, turn up the volume,

colour, feelings. Immerse yourself in your '10' movie and really enjoy it.

Decide on a specific behaviour to trigger the good feelings in your mind. Now, whenever you get a rejection, find yourself again by just using your chosen specific behaviour to restore your faith in being alive and being yourself. Good feelings can take the place of the hurt or depression you can feel after a boring 'No'. This method really works.

Enrol in adult education courses

When jobs are hard to find, enrolment in tertiary studies or adult education classes should be considered. Never has there been such a wide range of subjects and facilities to improve our knowledge.

We may need, or even want, to change careers several times during our working life. Carefully selected education can considerably aid this process. It would be a rare course of study which did not improve employment chances as well.

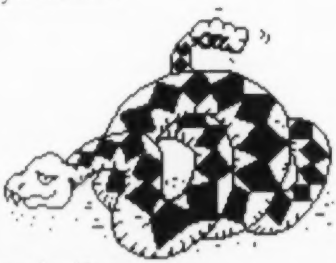
Examine whether a study program would be a better proposition for you than the weariness of having little to do while you are out of work. Being able to write down your progress with your studies on job applications could even give you a competitive edge over other applicants.

Join or form a self-help club

People out of work need a forum in which to pool their skills and experience in job seeking, to converse with others about their feelings and their experiences and to make purposeful use of each day.

A self-help club needs the minimum of formal organisation. It can be initiated by community service groups such as Rotary, Apex or Lions, employer or industry associations, churches, Chambers of Commerce or by unions. Even employers, mindful of their corporate

Redundancy can cause
the 'Snake Syndrome':



- Loss of self-respect;
- Atrophy of skills;
- Reduced living standards and social life.

All these contribute to steadily increasing pressures.

image, can start one without having to commit themselves to employing the job seekers who join it.

A number of self-help groups have been formed specifically for job seekers. Some are begun by community service organisations, others created by job seekers on their own initiative.

Whenever there is a need to protect against the loss of self-confidence, alleviate the stigma and stress of being unemployed or help others handle the shock of job loss, self-help groups have a practical purpose. Members help each other with job-hunting techniques, review each other's job applications and résumés, draw on each other's skills to complete application forms, research the needs of prospective employers, plan interview strategy and carry out conversation analysis when the interview is finished. Such groups can quickly grow to become known as a well-regarded source for employers to turn to when they need to hire. No agency placement fees or media advertising costs are involved.

All that is needed to form a self-help group is a place to meet for use between nine and five or early evenings

and help with letting people know about the self-help club's formation.

If you are an employer, you and your staff could arrange a roster system with the minimum disruption to your business activities to spend time with an existing self-help club. You could arrange for guest speakers from among your group of friends, colleagues and acquaintances.

Alternatively, why not start one if you find a self-help group does not exist in the vicinity of your business. It is a way you can provide constructive help that will not be seen as a charitable handout and could earn you increased regard. Your gesture in forming a self-help club could break the paralysis of loneliness affecting so many in our country.

If your business operates from nine to five, your facilities, word processors, laser printers are lying idle outside these hours and could be utilised by people in real need. If you have a meeting or training room which is not used for part of the day, put it to use as a self-help club facility.

If for some reason it is not practical for your firm or organisation to be involved in this way, consider who you could approach to get a self-help club under way. It is not much to ask. You might need this kind of support yourself one day.

Survival Tips

- Take a positive attitude. Think of yourself as one of the 95 per cent who get jobs, not as one of the 5 per cent who don't.
- Don't look for a 'meal ticket'. There is not one job you can go for that is going to guarantee you security.
- Be flexible in your attitudes. You will be trained for a whole number of jobs in your working lifetime. You will have to be flexible to cope with these different jobs.
- Be adaptable. You can't specify a particular job with a particular company with a particular type of manager in a particular suburb with hours that suit you.
- The employer calls the tune—you often have to adapt to what is offered at the time.
- Don't hassle over travel. It's nice to work close to home, but it's worth travelling to a satisfying job. Be prepared to travel a bit for that attractive job.
- Don't sell yourself short. Look at, and for, your good points, what you can do, then sell yourself to yourself before you try to sell yourself to someone else.
- Don't give up if you're not immediately successful.

2.6

11 Sample job application letters

When we want something of importance to us from someone else, our tendency is to communicate many reasons why. In fact, we often keep justifying to such an extent that we either bore or discourage the person from granting our request. Writing job application correspondence often creates the same problem—letters full of reasons why we should be the chosen applicant. The more effective way is to compose a short letter which clearly states the purpose of writing and requests the action we wish the recipient to take. In most cases, the action we want is to be invited for an interview. Remember, job application letters should complement our résumé—not repeat what is recorded in it.

You may think that the letters which follow are too short, even abrupt. However, they suit the people who will read them—busy people. People who have distractions from our personal need for attention; distractions such as other job applicants, meetings to prepare for and attend, telephone messages to return, discussions to be held with boss and subordinates. Such people resent their time being wasted. They are quickly deterred by job seekers who state what they want, rather than give a précis what they offer, whose address, name or contact telephone number is unclear, who provide in a laborious way extensive reasons why they plan to leave, or have left, their employer, who sound pompous and act as if only they can carry out the tasks of the vacancy.

> ☛ *No job application letter alone secured a job offer. The objective is to gain selection for an interview.*

Pay careful attention to the style, tone and clarity of the letters which follow. They have achieved the required result for many hundreds of job seekers.

These sample letters will help to you write good job application letters of your own. Read them all carefully. The aims of the people writing these letters will differ from your own and they may well mention things you have not done. These letters will, nonetheless, give you the general idea.

Underline sentences that you might be able to use or change to suit your own letter. You should obtain good results by constructing your letter in ways similar to these samples.

Unsolicited application to employers

You and your colleagues in the marketing and sales function could be interested in an employee with a very useful combination of skills and knowledge.

Experience in direct contact with consumers in sales situations, involvement in production processes and their development, and relevant degree-level training is a précis of my capabilities.

I would like to learn more (at your convenience) about where I can assist your product development and marketing programs.

Please contact me soon—I have prepared well for such a discussion, as you will see from my enclosed résumé.

Unsolicited application to employers

My research indicates that your company is likely to be interested in a person with strong management and administrative experience.

Please consider me for a position that would benefit from my expertise. To assist your evaluation I have enclosed a résumé which highlights my accomplishments.

At the moment I am the Customer Relations Manager for ABC Australia, Melbourne. I moved to Melbourne from Sydney four years ago and I now wish to return. This is not possible with my present employer.

In the event of an offer being made and accepted, I am in a position to commence work within four weeks. May I assure you that any expectations on my behalf concerning relocation expense subsidy are realistic. If an employer were not to provide full reimbursement I would not allow such a factor to inhibit my acceptance of an appropriate long-term career opportunity.

Establishing leads to vacancies in the future

Your new assignment was recently announced in the *Journal*. I offer my congratulations and wish you success. As the article mentioned that you would be seeking new directions, I'm sure your first order of business is reassessing staff needs.

I am currently exploring new opportunities and have enclosed a summary of my qualifications.

Again, congratulations on your new position.

Unsolicited application to recruitment consultants

Have you a client in need of a very competent person accomplished in marketing management? I would be worth your time interviewing.

In addition to the credentials in the enclosed résumé, I offer:

- maturity and confidence to market in diverse industries;
- a first-rate knowledge of international trade counselling and export sales;
- versatility in negotiating skills at all levels;
- enthusiasm, drive and energy to work hard;
- resourcefulness and tenacity to persevere and resolve difficult business problems.

Please call me on 722.3961 to arrange a discussion.

Search for temporary or freelance work

I am seeking employment, preferably as a permanent employee or, if such a position is not available, as a sub-contractor or freelance executive.

My enclosed résumé indicates a wide range of useful employment experiences and professional expertise.

Please forward my details to clients that you believe may be interested in my capabilities or arrange a discussion with me to explore my options.

If you require further information, please contact me on (002) 84.9177.

Unsolicited application to employers

My research indicates that your company is likely to be interested in an ambitious young engineer, keen for further experience within the engineering profession. Waiting for the 'right' recruitment advertisement to appear doesn't suit my nature and eagerness to progress my career.

So I am approaching you with the conviction that I can offer the following:

- thorough training and experience in the fundamentals of engineering;
- intelligence and the capacity to learn;
- an enthusiasm for maintaining control over a number of tasks at one time;
- ability to work efficiently and effectively with people;
- an awareness that I have much to learn, building on my very useful experience and training.

The attached résumé outlines briefly the activities from which I have learnt the meaning of hard work and developed my attitude towards working conscientiously for my employer. I am prepared to relocate speedily for a suitable opportunity.

An early opportunity to meet with you would be appreciated. I can be contacted by telegram or telephone on (02) 721.9370.

Unsolicited application to employers

Can your organisation use a capable Plant Engineer or Chief Engineer who can handle varied assignments in the areas of Manufacturing Management, Production or Engineering?

I've had over 12 years of good experience in manufacturing and engineering. I'm experienced in most plant engineering requirements and in the construction of production machinery. I can direct others effectively and control work-in-progress.

Among my accomplishments are:

- I successfully handled an assignment creating special cutting tools that developed substantial new sales for XYZ Pty Ltd.
- I personally developed a number of unique and effective processes and machines which saved production costs.
- I have demonstrated my ability to work with and through others—and get the job done.

I'm willing to travel and would relocate for the right opportunity. My résumé is enclosed for your review. May I talk with you?

☛ *Don't forget to write thankyou letters to those who have helped when you succeed in your re-employment quest.*

Response to advertisements

Ref: Construction Civil Engineer

Your advertised need for an engineer could be met by me. My credentials include a good record of conscientious study for an honours level degree and practical experience with one of the leading consulting engineering firms. This employment enabled me to learn much from very experienced professionals.

I am now keen to apply my capabilities to the tasks you have outlined in your advertisement.

A meeting between us could establish specifically where I can contribute to your business needs. Please contact me by telegram to the address above or leave a message on (03) 831.9593.

Reminding an employment agency or management consultant of your continuing interest

It may be that since my last contact with you an opportunity that would make use of my capabilities has arisen among your clients. While my primary interest is in telecommunications, I am quite prepared to undertake an appropriate opportunity that may require a change in career direction.

I would like to meet you to discuss this further. Please let me know by telephoning me on 273.5915.

Response to advertisements

Your company is looking for an assistant cost accountant as indicated in your advertisement in *The Age* on 23 February.

My enclosed résumé lists the courses and subjects I have completed in accounting in preparation for such a position. Please note that many of the subjects were completed with credit and distinction awards.

Although my work experience is limited, I have had opportunities on a part-time basis to show my commitment to work and attention to detail. This has been demonstrated while working as assistant bookkeeper at Jones Electric and as treasurer for the University Ski Club.

I am eager to learn more about the challenges of the vacancy. Please read my résumé and permit me to telephone your secretary next week to arrange for an appointment.

Accepting an employment offer

Your offer of employment has been received following our discussion. I am pleased to accept this appointment. The terms and conditions you have proposed are also acceptable to me.

I look forward to contributing to the tasks and challenges you described when I commence employment on 8 September.

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Paul Stevens
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